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THROUGH  
TWO DECADES

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# THROUGH TWO DECADES

BY

THEODOR WOLFF

(Editor of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, 1906-1933)

*Translated by*  
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## INTRODUCTION

IN the garden of a country house that faces the sea from one of the chains of hills by the French Mediterranean coast, there used to meet together regularly every Sunday, and sometimes on weekdays, a group of people of very different types but united by their intellectual interests. They came from various countries, they were not working in the same field, their political views often conflicted; but they were full of knowledge or of the love of it, and they spent their days between the heritage of past centuries and the problems of the present one. Not all of them were passionately concerned with these problems; some were painfully moved by them, but others, filled with the sense of the transiency of all things, were as aloof as a marabou stalking over the buried tombs of countless generations of Pharaohs. Most of them, for the very reason that they had been driven by events from homes that had become dear to them and professions that had been their livelihood and their life, and had started now on a precarious pilgrimage, preferred to conceal their feelings: they felt the impulse of the sick man surrounded by a lively company to hide from them the anxiety gnawing at his heart.

The owner of the beautiful country house was an authority on art, a Hamburger by birth. He had arranged a wealthy American's picture gallery and collection of bronzes, had married the daughter of this Maecenas, and had himself become an American. He had written several books on the



masters of Siena, on Giotto and his teacher Cimabue. In the end he had come to feel that the studios of the old masters had been ransacked to their last dusty corner, and now, having an ironic spirit, he occupied himself with the discovery of forgeries in the museums, or of pictures erroneously assigned some great name, and with demonstrating that their admirers had been fooled. Gracious and hospitable, and free from narrow prejudices, he assembled in his home, under the orange trees or in his magnificent library, those residents along the coast, or passing visitors, who seemed to him to fit into the circle round his table; and he was always ready to help if he found that someone to whom he was attracted was in difficulties. His wife, still young, and thoroughly American, only rarely joined in the conversation at these gatherings, contenting herself as a rule with listening attentively as she crocheted an unending series of sweaters and shawls.

In addition to myself and my family, six other people from Germany had drifted into this neighbourhood. One of them was the author of a play that had been performed many hundred times, and of delightful novels full of the fragrance of his native soil, a man outstanding through his creative intellect, his wide range of learning, his lofty character and breadth of mind—the refined product of a pure Germanic stock. He and his wife had been driven out by nothing worse than the need for a change of air. Another famous man in this German group was a Jewish physician, a great authority on kidney diseases, with many distinctions in the medical world, now expelled from German lecture rooms and occupied for the moment with a book on his special subject for an English publisher. There were also a Jewish professor of mathematics, now an old man, quiet and depressed, and his

more lively wife, who used to say resolutely that if there was no improvement in their situation she and her husband were determined—the determination was only on her side—to make an end of it and kill themselves. At that time they were in very bad circumstances, and it was difficult to see how they could have existed without the kindness of our host, who had furnished a room for them in the pavilion in his garden. They had two daughters living with relations in Germany; their only son had fallen in Alsace at the very outset of the war. Finally there was a beautiful young girl, daughter of a Prussian general's widow, from Brandenburg; she was acting as secretary to the famous physician, and had a friend, as it turned out, a German painter, who was living in one of the villages on the shore; he never came up to the villa.

Other Germans came at times, and I have only mentioned those who were always there. Most of the guests belonged to other nations, but this did not prevent the conversation from frequently turning to Germany, when it usually became much more heated than over any other country, Russia or Spain, for instance, although the company included some actual émigrés from those countries. One of the host's intimate friends was an Americanized Norwegian writer who amused himself, like Flaubert, by collecting all the portentous commonplaces and pompous stupidities he came across; his favourite fishing ground was the learned journals, or so he said. Among the regular visitors were the French modern literature teacher at the Lycée in the neighbouring town and his plump and cheerful wife; a banker from Geneva, clearly no longer tied to his business; an Englishman who grew carnations on his estate on hills near by and was a student of philosophy and religion; and an Italian countess, divorced wife of a

diplomat, who in spite of her admiration for Mussolini was living outside Italy, in order to care in exile for a political leader, now nearly blind, who had counted for something in Italy's past, and probably also in her own.

It was inevitable that the talk should frequently turn to émigré life, not exclusively German, though that would rarely be far from people's minds. There were those who spoke of rising above the blows of fate, but this was not so easy for victims oppressed by daily anxieties. The duty of mutual aid in undeserved misfortune was admitted by all. The duty to the homeland was viewed in differing ways. Some were for continuing from abroad the struggle against the men now in power; others preferred working in a different way, and had no intention, unmistakable though their opinions were, of carrying on an incessant war of words. The broad idea of all who were together in that fresh and sunny atmosphere was plain beyond all misunderstanding, and even if they had no knowledge of Jefferson's document, the essence of their intellectual and moral outlook was contained in that passage of the American Declaration of Independence of July 4th, 1776:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

With one single exception the whole of the company of guests agreed that every émigré, German or Russian, Spaniard or Italian, must shun any sort of hostile attitude towards his native country and refuse to join in any organized movement directed against it. When the exiled Dante dropped on his knees before the Emperor Henry and implored that monarch to invest and reduce the poet's native

city, Florence, in its arrogance, this appeal to an alien monarch may have been ennobled in the poet's mind by the dream of the great, all-comprehending Imperium. Heinrich Heine's love of his country did not wither in the land of exile, and Victor Hugo, the trumpet-toned high priest of the émigrés, who launched his comminations against despotism from Jersey and Guernsey, remained an ardent French patriot. Only the Norwegian-American objected that French despotism did not declare Victor Hugo to be unworthy, on account of his opinions, to be called a Frenchman, and the pre-1848 Reaction did not expel Heine from the community of Germans on account of his race. It could be taken for granted, however, that even this member of the round table, who represented a sort of radical Opposition, held no brief for the French Royalists who in Coblenz prayed for the victory of the Coalition and ultimately returned to France under its protection.

The wife of the professor of mathematics was thinking of her husband's case, and remarked that Victor Hugo was not in want in Jersey, and that Heine, for all his outspoken contempt of the Reaction, was able to turn his work to account and earn a living in Germany. The Genevese banker, not to hide his literary knowledge entirely under a bushel, delivered judgment on Victor Hugo. In the resounding works, he said, of that Titan, French critics were now disrespectfully exposing all the absurdities and fatuities covered by the dazzling revelry of words; yet he had filled his verse with a melody few others could attain, he had been a master of trumpet and flute alike, and in the ferment and the fullness of his creative activity he had become a figure of almost legendary power to his contemporaries. His *Châtiments* was an undying example of polemical literature.

The novelist agreed, but pointed out that after all, in spite of those trumpet tones, which for many years had unceasingly invaded Paris from Jersey and Guernsey, it was not Victor Hugo who brought down Napoleon III, but Bismarck. It was true, of course, that this abated nothing from the quality of *Châtiments*.

The young girl quoted from Rilke's *Cornet*:

"Not to be always soldiering. Just once in a way to go bareheaded and with wide open collar, and to sit about on silken settees, tingling to the finger-tips with that 'after-the-bath' feeling——"

and all there was to say to that was that the émigré saw little as a rule of silken settees. The French literature teacher recalled that the Abbé Sieyès, the great theoretician of the principles of the Constitution, Sieyès of "The Third Estate," withdrew in the later years of the Revolution into a "philosophic silence," and subsequently, when he was asked what he had done during the Terror, replied: "*J'ai vécu*"—"I kept alive." The Norwegian-American, contentious as ever, pointed out that Sieyès had knitted away at his constitutional ideas like our honoured hostess with her sweaters, fitting in the colours now this way and now that, just for the pleasure of exercising his skill. The rest of the company readily agreed that the Abbé Sieyès was justified in his "philosophic silence" and Victor Hugo in his polemics, and that the things that mattered were steadfastness and the right spirit.

At times, however, feelings were roused in the discussion of the events of our day; some of the women especially spoke with passion: the men generally showed more capacity for taking their troubles stoically. If, as occasionally happened, there were any Russian émigrés in the company, there would

be a sort of rivalry between the older and the more recent misfortune. In order to compel self-control it was agreed to institute a penalty for heated language, proportioned to the temperature. A poor-box, with primitive Gothic carving on the front of it, was brought along: probably it had once been in some country church, and it had found its way into the host's collection with other, more valuable things—and thereafter everybody who fell under contribution dropped in his coin. Thus, against a dissenting minority, the view prevailed that there should be limits to the discussion of things which no discussion could alter, and that efforts should be made, following the precedent of the "Decameron," to divert thoughts from troubles that tended to be obsessions.

Various members of the society were asked to contribute to this diversion by giving readings or lectures. The host promised to give an account of his adventures in Spain in the hunt for spurious "old masters." The French literature teacher announced a series of lectures on Love among the Romantics. The novelist proposed to read the work he had just finished, in which he resuscitated Saint Francis of Assisi as a human figure. The Viking from America was called upon for specimens of pompous nonsense from his great collection, which was carefully arranged with date and source and name of author in a whole series of portfolios, and for which new specimens were breeding as thickly as flies in August. Various suggestions were put to the physician, but he felt unable to contribute, and that was understood in the circumstances. I was asked to speak of my experiences and of "Leaders of the Nation" I had met, and I agreed to do something of the sort. I had written of men and events of the years before the war in two books, *Vorspiel* and *The Eve of 1914* ("Der Krieg des Pontius Pilatus"); now there

should be some further pictures of men who had helped to guide Germany's destiny—or, at all events, had seemed to have a share in this honour—with the people marching always alongside, marching in step, as willing servants.

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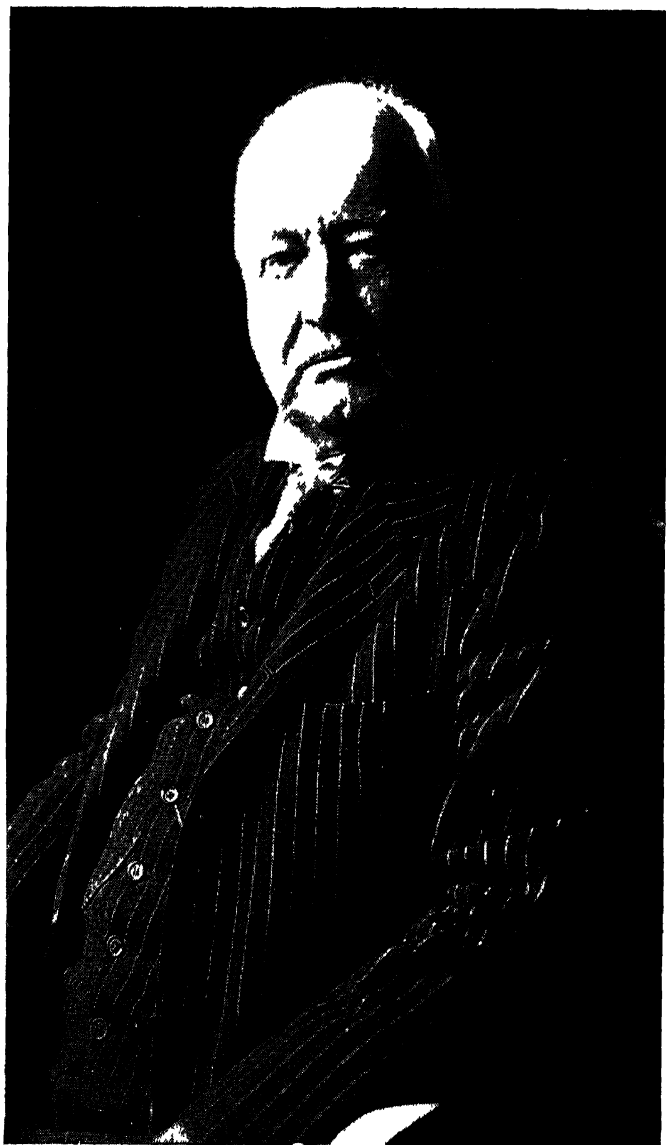
PRINCE BÜLOW AT THE WINDOW

THERE was a desperate scandal when the *Memoirs* of Prince Bülow appeared and people turned over the pages of these literary remains. No stink-bomb of this calibre had burst since on the eve of the French Revolution the Comte de Mirabeau delivered to Madame le Jay, the Delilah among his women friends, the manuscript of his *Correspondance Secrète* on Berlin and the Court of Frederick William II. The "best" people in Germany—the people who carried a marshal's baton in their knapsack and an invitation to the Court ball in their pocket—had never had much cause for rejoicing over memoirs proceeding from their midst. First there had been Varnhagen's diaries, then, later, those of the Emperor Frederick, then the chapters on William II in Prince Bismarck's *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, and the memoirs of Prince Hohenlohe and of Count Waldersee; and alongside these more or less classic works there had been those of Baron von Eckardstein, of von Zedlitz-Trützschler, former Marshal of the Court, and of *Geheimrat* Hammann. But, partly on account of the way Prince Bülow had prepared the poison and dispensed it—in such enormous quantity and at the same time in such daintily cut phials—and partly on account of the high position he had held, his *Memoirs* were felt to be particularly unsavoury, and aroused infinite resentment. If there had been any monuments to Prince Bülow in the public squares, the



bronze would certainly have been melted down, the marble smashed to pieces, and no trace left of them. Fortunately he had not been precipitately honoured in metal or stone, but only in the comparative privacy of oils.

To most even of those to whom Bülow had given occasional hints of his work, the book came as a surprise; this, at all events, was not quite what they had imagined. For my part, I must admit that I expected the white ointment that is gently applied by the diplomatic physician to sore places, not the notorious white powder from the pharmacy of Cesare Borgia. When Bülow discussed William II, with his admitted faults (but "he is so badly served"), the truths that had unhappily to be spoken were spoken always in a tone of real regret. There was a limit, of course, to the capacity of those of Bülow's hearers who knew and could appreciate the circumstances to credit everything he said, and to take him for a reincarnation of Grillparzer's "loyal servant of his master," invincibly humble and obedient in spite of all kicks and cursings; but they expected at least to find in the book the old statesmanly air of ironic superiority, with the rancour never in full view of the public but concealed beneath the aristocratic elegance of the man of the world. Prince Bülow had always set great store by this worldly elegance, he had been the pattern of the cultured European statesman, all dignity and graciousness, and the only slight blemish that appeared, since, after all, he was no bourgeois parvenu, was that he was too obviously gratified at his possession of these high qualities. His *Memoirs* showed all this readiness to contrast the distinction and sureness and tact of those who, like himself, were at home in the "great world," in European society, with the behaviour of democratic intruders, over whom he poured his caustic pity. But after the neat malice



CHANCELLOR PRINCE BÜLOW



of these passages, devoted to the male objects of his aversion, we found on the very next page offensive indiscretions concerning women, even women of imperial rank. There were broad slits in the lacquer of worldly elegance, and at times, unfortunately (and this was the only real surprise), the brake of discretion and intelligence had failed.

I found it much less painful that he often over-elaborated the truth, giving it a new and changed appearance. Those who had had opportunities of observing Bülow at close quarters knew very well how in his accounts of events the facts would sometimes go through a gradual process of transformation, his brush constantly heightening the lights and deepening the shades until the original rough sketch had become a work of art. This artistry had often been applied with a regrettable nonchalance, and there was no need to watch with the sharpened senses of a rival in order to detect plain evidence of distortion. But the virtuous souls who now cried out against him and excommunicated him as a perverter of the truth evinced a zeal for truth of which they had given much less evidence in countless other cases.

And have not almost all who have played a public part, or supposed themselves to have done so, seen their role in the deceptive glow of the footlights? Is not, indeed, the most courageous candour usually just vanity and self-admiration? Ulysses with his noble endurance, Ulysses the "inventive," as Johann Heinrich Voss so neatly translated the Homeric epithet, was able to tell such stories of his adventures to Alcinous, the noble ruler of the Phæacians, and his Court, and later in Ithaca to his wife and son and faithful swineherd, because the companions of his wanderings lay at the bottom of the sea and there were none who could disprove his narrative. Who can say how much of his inventiveness was

not mere invention? What was the real truth about the outwitting of Polyphemus?

The sense of fine distinctions is one of the principal elements of cultural advance and refinement. But after Prince Bülow had drawn universal reprobation upon himself by the publication of his *Memoirs*—a reprobation which, it is true, could no longer hurt him—he now passed for nothing better than a wretched charlatan, an infamous impostor, the author of all Germany's misfortunes, the fouler of his own nest. It was natural that it should be just those who had been loud in their servile praises of him in the days of his power and his great political sins, who now hurled the biggest stones at his grave. Even the best of them, fickle as the Romans, forgot their yesterday's love when—not, of course, with Brutus's dagger, but with the pen of the autobiographer—he pricked Cæsar at the tenderest spots. It is arguable that the figure of Prince Bülow revealed a new strength, his backbone a new firmness, with this proof of his capacity for storing up hatred and of the deliberation of his vengeance. All he had revealed in his lifetime had been slighter and less downright reactions, and the discovery that he had kept this nest of serpents so long hidden among the flowers in the garden of Klein-Flottbeck, or in the park of the Villa Malta, was evidence of a trait which may have lacked nobility but had a pleasing directness.

At a later day it will probably be considered that, of all the volumes of reminiscences in which prominent personages of the Wilhelmian era told its story in their own defence or praise, few are so readable and so well worth reading as Prince Bülow's book. In spite of his appeal to the gallery and his self-complacency, in spite of all the intrigues and all the troubled waters that swirl and eddy in his pages, there

is more light on his epoch to be gained from this contemporary picture than from the grey tones of respectable historical paintings. Nobody familiar with Saint-Simon will need to be told that the sharpened and polished intelligence of Prince Bülow, perfectly adapted to the cultivation of the art of making effective points, is not to be compared with that genius, that unique, instinctive, self-evolved power, owing nothing to any predecessor, which secretly, inquisitively, mercilessly dogged the all-unconscious court society of Versailles, and seemed to get behind its physiognomies and extract their innermost secrets. But if Prince Bülow had no intention of providing a modern counterpart, as Marcel Proust has done, to that magnificent palace portrait gallery, there does exist a similarity between the prince and the French duke—a similarity which, it is true, on closer inspection turns into dissimilarity. Saint-Simon was like Bülow in his inability to be “objective” and non-partisan, and he knew it, and as he was a man with moral scruples there were times when he was touched with repentance and deplored his inability to escape from falling again and again into the sin of false witness. Prince Bülow waded deep in that sin, but he was not a moralist, and his satisfaction in wreaking vengeance was disturbed by no twinges of conscience.

In any case, are not the false and the spurious, the transparent sanctimoniousness and the pose of *grandezza*, things which the observer may find amusement and enjoyment in watching? They certainly are—when humour, ironic humour, is brought to the study of the personage who displays them. It would be possible to write a comprehensive treatise on the question whether it is permissible for historians to have humour. Those who possess this humour

chase it away from their study, as though they feared that it would bring a blemish on their reputation, would damage their authority among their colleagues. Even Voltaire, in his history of the age of Louis XIV, kept the straightest of faces under his courtier's wig, the sober face of the "Historiographe du Roi," and nothing of the smiling philosophy of *Candide* found its way into the pompous eulogy. On one occasion he declared, to justify himself, that he had been concerned to exercise patriotic reticence—and is it not true of ninety-nine out of a hundred modern historians, just as of him, that the sun of patriotism shines so brightly that the dazzled eye is quite unable to see the truth? Lytton Strachey, who was taken away too soon from his admirers, had the subtlest sense for vague and doubtful and half-lit things, and showed a connoisseur's gratification in the detection of human errors and failings; but he kept with consummate tact within the limit beyond which the slightest undertone of irony or humour is no longer permissible. In this way he was able to bring the figure of General Gordon close in front of the observer, and a searchlight of that quality could be allowed to play for a moment even on elements in the character of Napoleon or Frederick the Great or Goethe, but on no account where, as in Dante and Schiller, there is complete harmony between the nobility of the conception and the purity of its creator. Similarly the gentlest play of humour is inappropriate in dealing with the brutal and the infamous. But in the presence of Prince Bülow, who wandered with so much charm between the heights and the depths, it is not always necessary to be pedantically critical.

I felt this amusement over tones of self-evident falseness—an amusement entirely compatible with genuine admiration

of brilliant talents—when I first came into contact with Prince Bülow. It was at a reception at the Chancellor's palace in honour of a foreign guest, and I had been unable to decline the invitation as I usually did on principle. Since I felt compelled to attack Bülow as Chancellor almost incessantly on account alike of his home and his foreign policy, I was not at all anxious for any personal acquaintance: in such cases one is put into an ambiguous situation. Prince Bülow was a dangerous breaker of hearts, an irresistible Pied Piper, and, however much one might be proof against allurements, it is not too pleasant to have to return hospitality on the following day with fresh tilts against the policy of one's host. But this time there was no help for it. Von Flotow, Bülow's diplomatic adjutant, later Ambassador at Rome, was sent to fetch me, and I was taken away from the crush to a little room into which the Chancellor came in a moment by another door. I have no recollection of what he said in the course of our short conversation, apart from the echo of compliments too flattering to ring true. But I still remember that he was squeezed into a hussar's uniform too tight for him; the flesh rebelled against the close confinement, and the soldierly trappings were as ill-suited to the well-nourished frame and the round face, at that time clean-shaven, as is the insignificant figure of Charles V to his suit of armour and steel lance and mail-clad war-horse, in that portrait by Titian, now in the Prado, of the Emperor on the morning after the battle of Mühlberg. It is well known, and a commonplace of the "psychology of love," that the most trivial peculiarity in appearance, especially if it has an element of the comic, may entirely upset the atmosphere of a rendezvous. On this evening I was not seduced.

I have told elsewhere of my repeated meetings with Prince



Bülow after he had had to climb down from the summit of power to the lowlands of private life. He lavished upon me his wealth of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, fact and fiction, showing off with equal grace the sparkle of the real stones and of the not quite real ones. I learned from him a good deal worth knowing, and at the same time found in these talks an artistic pleasure such as was once to be got from a perfectly played French comedy of manners. It was not always quite easy to keep Prince Bülow to any particular subject in conversation or to bring him back to it, but gradually one acquired adeptness in doing so. In his last years he would sometimes repeat a story or witticism he had brought out a little earlier, and he was then a little tiresome, but at the next visit one felt that he was as wonderful as ever. Every time he came to Berlin and I did not feel up to going to see him or was too busy, he sent me a few lines or made his valet telephone an invitation to me. Then I would go obediently and almost always gladly. Sometimes before the war he would come himself, and I can still see him as he sat one evening at my table opposite Count Keyserling, submitting with disgust and impatience to the interesting but almost irrepressible torrent of talk from the great travelling philosopher, who tolerated the presence of no other prophet.

During the war Bülow was particularly communicative; through those four years, indeed, there were very many men, especially men of the "ruling classes," who felt this need to unburden their minds. They met every evening in the club rooms of the Deutsche Gesellschaft, which had been founded for war aims of this sort, and in this Delphi they listened to the oracles or delivered their own latest ones. Prince Bülow could not visit this rumour market, but he felt the necessity

of giving expression to his anxieties and disapproval when he saw the mistakes made by his successor and the appalling short-comings of the diplomats. I had been an opponent of Bülow's policy, but found the policy of Bethmann Hollweg and Jagow still more unintelligible; so the prince liked to talk to me. However widely divergent our views had been at the Bülow station, which was now a long way off, they unfailingly coincided at the Bethmann terminus.

I will give some extracts from these war-time conversations with Prince Bülow, and, though these notes will not supply historical research with fresh matter, it may be found that the method of allowing a personality to portray itself in the characteristic style of its owner's conversation has advantages that are not confined to fiction and the stage. Prince Bülow was at Klein-Flottbeck when the war broke out; on August 2 he came to Berlin on receiving the news that his brother, the major-general, had fallen. On the day following his arrival I went to the Hotel Adlon to express sympathy with him. In the hall of the hotel the rich American families were crowded together, waiting for the opportunity to leave Germany, and surrounded with flattering attentions, since America was regarded as "pro-German." Upstairs, in the small drawing-room which was regularly reserved for the Bülows, I first met only the princess—in half-mourning, black with white collar and a black veil enveloping her hair. She told me how much her husband had loved this brother, and went on to say:

"I confess that I find this whole war horrible. I am still unable to conceive how people who knew one another yesterday can shoot at one another to-day."

I agreed, and said it was difficult to get away from such thoughts and feelings. Bülow came in, looking thinner than

a short time before. He told me how he had learnt in Hamburg of his brother's death.

"Ballin came to me and asked me whether I had not heard anything—it was rumoured that my brother had fallen. I knew nothing; a few days before I had had a letter from my brother telling me he was off to the front and bidding me farewell, whatever might happen. I asked Ballin to telephone to Berlin to the General Staff, and he rang up from my room in the hotel. I sat on the sofa and waited, and two minutes later the reply came through—I heard it from where I was sitting—it was true, my poor brother was dead."

Turning away from his personal loss, he spoke of the great universal drama and said he had full confidence in the Chief of Staff, von Moltke, whom he knew well. He said he approved of the advance into Belgium, and did not share my objections and doubts. He had expected more from Italy and did not regard the Italian policy as very wise. Naturally Italy, with her long coastline, feared Great Britain's enmity, but the British would scarcely have bombarded Genoa and Naples, and would probably have thought twice about it. The German people at this hour were so simple and natural, so entirely free from pose, really admirable—"one could kiss them," the princess had said to him. Of course he thought highly of the French too, they had splendid qualities, but there was always something of pose about them. In this conversation Bülow was himself more simple and natural than on many other days; the death news had made him feel the vanity of all things and seemed to have softened him. I think his feeling for a few persons closely related to him was the only warm feeling in him, the only one that did not merely flicker on the surface and evaporate in fine phrases; this could be seen, indeed, again at a much later date, when

he accompanied the coffin with his dead wife in it to Klein-Flottbeck, calmly and without inviting tiresome sympathy. He was indifferent to religious and other reproaches, and only concerned to fulfil the last wishes of his life's companion.

At the beginning of December 1914 it was finally decided, after a long struggle between opposing views, to send Prince Bülow on a special mission to Rome, and the decision was made public. Secretary of State von Jagow and his group in the Foreign Ministry had strongly opposed this move, but had had to give way in the end, as it was necessary to demonstrate to the public that every effort had been made, and nothing neglected, to deter Italy from declaring war. On December 2 I received a letter from Bülow: he wanted "to exchange impressions and ideas" with me. In the afternoon I went to the Adlon to see him, poorly equipped for any exchange as I had nothing to offer, but very ready to receive his impressions and ideas. He was no longer under the softening influence of his grief; the fact that he had been appointed to a mission of the utmost importance, and was able to return to the great arena of European politics, had at once restored his buoyancy. He was no longer merely a clever private individual, a "has-been," dishing up reminiscences and quotations, but an active statesman, and his manner of expression, though he was as talkative as ever, had involuntarily recovered sharpness and precision. Physically, too, he was smarter and more elastic, and his chest was thrust out with a new energy. It would, of course, have been absurd to take amiss his gratification at the fresh opportunity of active work, and any ambitious man of lesser calibre and less brilliant qualities would have been more tastelessly vainglorious in such good fortune. Prince Bülow had, after all, long been accustomed to eminence, and there

was no peacockery; he was merely brightened and stimulated. All the old Bülow had returned, not excluding the melodious, slightly rhetorical tones, sometimes so splendidly reminiscent of the stage, although he had not had to learn them in the first place, as Napoleon was taught the imperial gait by the tragedian Talma. He came towards me, saying:

"It is a grave time, a grave time."

As he made this double announcement, his thoughtful gaze seemed to be directed to the obscure destiny looming enigmatically over the distant horizon. In reality he saw himself in the midst of this grave time occupied with his peers, the other statesmen of eminence, restoring order in a world situation disastrously bungled by petty botchers and amateurs—the old magician of the ballad who has to repair the confusion wrought by the clumsiness of callow conjurers. As at this moment he had every reason for satisfaction, he merely discussed these bunglers with a little condescension, and this time treated them with comparative gentleness. For all that, there was no reason why in his responsible position he should dispense with objective criticism, and he did not dispense with it. First, however, there came the great aria, as in the Italian opera before the troubadour expires.

"We must not take away from this nation, this wonderful nation, its faith in the inevitability of the war. Must not take away its faith—you yourself have said so very finely, it has this faith, I feel just as you do about this. You know, in Hamburg I spent four hours in a hospital. I saw a man who had had both legs amputated: he asked whether I would like to see the stumps. I lifted up the coverlet and looked at them, raw and bleeding as they were. I said to him:

" 'You are a brave man.' He replied:

" 'I only did my duty.'

"I assure you, I am not sentimental, but I had a feeling of reverence, there is something holy, something sublime in this. The people are so full of faith—as Kätchen of Heilbronn\* in her knight."

Of course the admiration and veneration thus expressed were feelings shared at that time, together with immense compassion, by every man who had not become brutalized. Undoubtedly Prince Bülow was not assuming a vicarious reverence like some tourist kneeling down in St. Peter's just to give a good impression. But all these sentiments were expressed in phrases rather too well turned, were worked up with too much art. While he was describing his scene he did not look again at me; his gaze passed beyond his audience. There are some things, perhaps, which should ~~not~~ be too perfectly expressed. But if, as La Fontaine taught in his fable, we should not force our talents, on the other hand nobody can help his talent. Prince Bülow dwelt no longer on his hospital scene, but, just like other people who consider that they have deep feelings and yet can eat a hearty meal after an excursion into the world of sorrows, he turned from the impressions that weigh down the heart to a subject which his critical mind was revolving with intelligible persistence:

"I have a high opinion, of course, of Jagow, and Bethmann is a man of distinction and a thoroughly decent fellow. Quite certainly his intentions are of the very best. But a man with diplomatic experience would never have allowed this war to come—never; I am sure you agree. There was no evil intention, definitely none; thus the failure must have been due, after all, to inadequacy. I avoided war in 1905, and in 1909. I should never have let things go so far, I think I may

\*In the play by Heinrich von Kleist.—*Trans.*

say that of myself. Really, any diplomat of experience needed only a glance at the Austrian ultimatum to be able to put his finger on the spot at which the Serbs would be unable to give way any further and the Russians would step in. Alexander II declared war against Turkey on just such grounds, though he would much rather have stopped at home, and Nicholas I went to war, and the present Tsar, though he, too, would much rather have sat still with mother, had to do the same. But that could have been foreseen. And why was no use made of the expedient which Cambon suggested in his conversation with Jagow? What was Jagow's objection to the four Powers, Germany, Italy, France, and England, coming together to bring about an agreement? At least three of them, Germany, Italy, and, I am sure, also France, were not for war. I could not be quite so sure about England, I do not quite share the opinion of our mutual friend Lichnowsky about the worthy Grey, he really seems to me something of an enigma. But it was enough that the three others were for peace—why did Jagow reject that proposal? It has all brought us under the suspicion that we wanted war; first there was the ultimatum, then the rejection of the proposals put forward, and finally, on top of it all, it was we who declared war.

"I know what they will tell me in Rome. I shall not need to wait to hear it—we were intent on war, we have trampled on brave little Belgium, and then they will talk of the devastation in Belgium and the north of France, which is nothing but a heap of ruins.

"It was just as if two trains had been heading for a collision—no one knew how to stop them, and they just crashed into one another. If only there had been negotiations at least with Italy and Roumania while there was still time.

Or rather, we should have said to the Austrians, without worrying our heads about the troth of the Nibelungs, 'If you want us to stand by you, risking the lives of all our people, then make sure that Italy and Roumania bind themselves to come in with us. We will give you a fortnight to settle your business with the two of them.' It certainly would have been no easy task, but it had to be faced; a great deal, after all, depended on it. Italy might have insisted on getting the Trentino—or she might have contented herself with less. After the war had actually broken out I had a letter from San Giuliano, and he said much the same thing. All this we failed to do, and Barrère, the French Ambassador at Rome, has naturally been making the most of it. Barrère, by the way, is an old friend of mine, we have known one another for twenty-four years, a man of great gifts. Cambon, I suppose, will also come to Rome, we shall meet again there."

I asked him how he thought Jules Cambon and the other Ambassadors of the enemy states would behave if he met them, as was, of course, to be expected. He replied:

"In public, before all the world, I expect they will be very huffy, and if we meet off the stage they will say: '*Quel malheur!*'—'What a tragedy!' In spite of all our political differences, I was always on good terms with Jules Cambon. I had a high opinion of him, and he of me. He said to me when I left that at times I had made life hard for him, but I understood the French character, and he was very sorry I was going. I replied: 'You are only saying so,' but he stuck to it.

" 'Non,' he said, '*en toute sincérité. Vous nous avez mal traité, assez souvent, mais vous connaissez la France. Vous savez ce qui est impossible en France. Après vous d'autres viendront qui voudront forcer la note.*' " ("No, in all sincerity.



You treated us badly pretty often, but you know France. You know what is impossible in France. Others will come after you who will want to overdo it.”)

“He was right, I know France, I enjoyed living in Paris; take it all in all, it was a grand time for everybody, for you, too, I am sure; and the French have splendid qualities, a highly-gifted nation. Though I do not think it would have been possible to get anywhere with them.”

“So,” I said, “in plain words you are going to Rome with empty hands?”

“Entirely empty hands, it is quite true. There is a story, you will know it, of a furrier who had no money for his creditors, and told them funny stories instead. I have got to do business like the furrier and tell funny stories. It is the simple truth, and not a mere phrase, that I was not too keen to go. There is nothing that I can get out of it personally, it is a very thankless, a very thankless task. But I have really the feeling that at a time when every poor man is getting his limbs shot off for the Fatherland I cannot sit still in the Villa Malta. I have too much of a German’s, a Prussian’s feeling, and so I said Yes.”

We talked of the possibilities of peace, and he declared himself in favour of a more or less “harsh” peace: there was nothing to be done with the French; three-quarters of the nation were peaceable, but the decision always lay with the minority. If we won we must insist at least on the cession of Antwerp and of Belfort. Anyhow, he himself would fortunately have no part in it; Bethmann had written to him saying quite candidly that he intended to have the sole say in the making of peace, and that was very courageous, and really a creditable exhibition of a sense of duty, since, of course, Bethmann had been the author of the policy out of

which it had all come about. "Whoever is to make peace after this war will need to have a good thick skin, he will have plenty of stones thrown at him."

He had not yet said all he wanted to, and four days later he sent me a telephone message to say that he would like to see me again before he left for Rome in the evening. This time, as I entered his little sitting-room in the hotel, infantry were marching past with bands in Unter den Linden. Bülow was standing at the window, engrossed in the spectacle, looking on with deep seriousness.

"How many of these splendid young men," I said, "will come back?"

The music was already dying away in the distance when he turned to me and said, in tones of the deepest sincerity:

"Every man has his *toquade*, his obsession. Mine is that I am an enthusiastic Prussian. I feel it—every time soldiers march past down below."

Then, coming to business, he said he had been anxious to talk to me once more, for he thought the situation in Italy was very serious. "Very serious," he repeated, as was his habit when he was dwelling on anything or wanted to give it special emphasis—always conveying the impression in doing so that the words were coming up slowly out of the well of meditation.

"My wife's mother was quite right when she warned me; she is very shrewd, uncommonly shrewd. They will not strike yet, their preparations will not be complete before the end of February, but then they will wait for a pretext, an opportunity. It is very bad. Relations between Austria and Italy will have to be handled with the utmost caution, with the utmost caution; and it is no use talking to the Austrians, they refuse to open their eyes to the situation. I spoke to-day

very emphatically to the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, Prince Hohenlohe, I made no bones about it; in a friendly way, but also, of course, with some very plain speaking; we very nearly flew at one another. They simply refuse. There is not the slightest necessity to say to the Italians straight out, 'We will give you the Trentino': I know the Italians thoroughly well, I have lived so long among them; everything with them is '*una combinazione*,' a deal; it is only necessary to bear that in mind. In the Near East, when one comes to a carpet seller, he will ask three hundred lire for a carpet, and then one looks for *una combinazione*, and finally a bargain is struck. 'You want the Trentino? Well, we can talk about it. But, come now, our Emperor Francis Joseph is an old man, we cannot inflict that on him, but perhaps something else will please you. We will see if we can agree together on *una combinazione*, a deal which will bring you something really important and valuable.' "

Prince Bülow was walking up and down the room; once more, as so often when he was speaking in the Reichstag, he had his two thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat. For a moment he remained in thought; then he stopped in front of me and said:

"How could Bethmann do it? I do not understand him. He is an honourable man; a schoolmaster, as Ballin says, but for that very reason a conscientious man. What answer can he possibly give when he is asked on the Day of Judgment: 'Did you know beforehand what were the terms of the Austrian ultimatum? You knew, and yet did not see that it was bound to lead to war, and did nothing to remove the most dangerous points from it? You say you did not, you declare that you never set eyes on it? But why did you not make a point of doing so? How could you pledge the lives

and the worldly goods of sixty-seven million Germans, how could you stake the German Empire on this card which you had not even seen?" "

Bülow had a great gift of improvisation, but probably he had often turned over in his mind this interrogation Bethmann would have to face on the Day of Judgment. He paused for a moment, evidently in sympathy with the man suffering this ordeal at the Great Assize. But then he had something to say about Herr von Jagow, and here there was no need for any sentiment:

"That Jagow! I am a junker myself, but not the perfect junker: I have seen other countries besides Germany. Jagow has all their pettinesses, all their bad qualities. And it was I that made him. We are at the mercy of the men we raise up—that is the way of the world."

Undoubtedly this assessment of the Foreign Secretary was in no way influenced by the fact that Jagow, who had long been an enemy of Bülow, had been opposing the sending of the prince to Rome. It was merely one of those days on which Prince Bülow did not assume a rather sanctimonious air of pious forbearance, and did not modify the acrid taste of his words by the smallest bit of sugar. Goschen, the British Ambassador, has related how in his last conversation with Jagow, after the British declaration of war, the Foreign Secretary said to him that "the pestilential *Berliner Tageblatt*" was to blame for the hostile manifestations in front of the Ambassador's palace, because it had published a special issue announcing the British declaration of war. The truth is that the Foreign Ministry had given permission for this special issue, and Jagow sent me a message that he did not use the objectionable adjective "pestilential." Prince Bülow recalled this incident:

"I know Goschen—he is very tedious, but straightforward, the grandson, you know, of a German publisher, a thoroughly decent fellow. I was saying to friends of mine just lately, 'How could a German Secretary of State, to clear himself, vilify a German newspaper, and one of the greatest and most important papers, in front of a foreign Ambassador—at the moment of the outbreak of war, in front of the Ambassador of an enemy Power! The King of Roumania, who died of a broken heart because he saw his life's work destroyed by presumption in Vienna and incapacity in Berlin—King Carol once heard one of his guests, a foreigner, speak disparagingly of the *Adeverul*. The *Adeverul* was only an unimportant paper, but the king was very indignant at a foreigner saying anything in his presence against a Roumanian newspaper, and objected with the utmost emphasis."

Bülow considered that Bethmann Hollweg wanted an understanding with Russia; the Foreign Ministry insisted that he did not. "Bethmann," said Bülow, "has become very pessimistic, very different from what he was at the outset of the war. He was talking then of Odessa and Riga; now he declares that it is impossible to get at the Russians. I am only afraid that nobody in St. Petersburg would dream of considering the idea of a reconciliation. If that is what we are after now, it was a great mistake to publish the Tsar's telegrams. They will not forgive that in St. Petersburg; there are some things which simply cannot be done. Letters and telegrams from monarchs are not for publication—Bismarck never did such a thing."

"Have you seen the Kaiser?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," he replied, as though there had never been a moment of strained relations.

"How did you find him?"

"Oh, very grave—one might say in the best of spirits, but very grave."

When Bülow came in this conversation to the Italian way of getting out of difficulties by means of "*una combinazione*," it was interesting to notice how he dwelt on the phrase, repeated it and seemed to enjoy the sound of it. He seemed to caress it, and though he had not Duse's unforgettable voice one was reminded a little of the tender tone of the diva's "*amando, amando*" in the last act of *La Dame aux Camélias*. He had come under Italian influence through his wife and her mother, Laura Minghetti, in whose salon in Rome he had enlarged his education, and he liked to feel that he had a kinship, and not merely by marriage, with those Italian politicians who are accounted masters of subtlety, and whom the rest of the world is inclined to admire rather than trust. For him diplomacy was an art, and an elegant art. "*Una combinazione*"—to untie an apparently inextricable knot, with a dexterity that clumsy hands could never acquire, to produce in a critical situation the saving bright idea he had kept up his sleeve, to gain his point by the same sort of shrewdness as if he had cleverly talked a dealer into the worst of a bargain over a carpet—this was what he enjoyed, and he had a special gift for it. It is true that he usually exhibited his talent for a "*combinazione*" after bringing matters to such a pass that some such dodge was the only way out. Sometimes, as at the Algeciras Conference, Germany sacrificed her own substance in the deal, although Bülow subsequently tried to demonstrate to an incredulous public that a splendid bargain had been driven. The genuine carpet he bought was liable on closer inspection to prove not quite so genuine; but few could have equalled the happy turn of phrase with which at the last moment, in the very act of

going out of the shop, he could bring the haggling to an end. Prince Bülow was not content with the rough-and-ready method by which an Edgar Wallace could pile up complications and then solve the problem by a surprise trick; he had the light and gracious touch of an Eugène Scribe, and found pleasure in the use of the gift the Graces had bestowed on him.

On the day after this conversation Count Wedel telephoned to me from the Foreign Ministry. They knew, he said, that I had had a talk with Prince Bülow, and probably I had received too pessimistic an impression of the situation in Italy. Prince Bülow, when he called at the Ministry, had given a picture of things that suggested that Italy was strongly inclined to go into the war on the side of the Entente Powers. The intention was obvious—to exaggerate the difficulty of his mission, in order to be able later to exalt his achievement. My own impression was not of any undue pessimism but rather that he was entering on his journey in too enterprising a spirit, aware that he had the blessing of the Foreign Ministry, and relying on his star and the influence of his personality. Events in Rome pursued their natural course: the falling stone obeyed the law of gravity. At the beginning of May 1915 there were still people in Berlin who looked on all the Italian rumour of war as bluff; Herr Zimmermann, the Under Secretary of State in the Foreign Ministry, said to me: "I still think Giolitti will pull it off." But Flotow, the Ambassador, who had come from Italy, was more clear-sighted, and even Jagow no longer contended that Bülow had painted too dark a picture. To add to the anxiety, it was considered that Roumania would be sure to join the enemy front immediately after Italy.

On May 20 the last doubt was removed; the Italian

Parliament had declared for war, and, even before the critical day, Giolitti, the great tactician from whom the politically blind had still expected a miracle, had retired to his country seat. Three days later Prince Bülow left Rome, and with him, amid reluctant farewells, his wife. The spell of his conversation, his personal authority, his shrewdly presented arguments, his social connexions—nothing of all this had been able to prevent the decision. No "*combinazione*" had availed in a negotiation in which his rivals offered much higher prices. He had done all that was humanly possible, and could reasonably claim that his dialectics had, at all events, produced a delay of military importance in the decision for war. His defeat was undeniable, but he came away undisturbed: it was not he who had lost the battle, and he returned home in no beaten spirit.

When I visited him after his arrival in Berlin, he bore no trace of his trying experiences, or of disappointment and uneasiness. He was fresh and lively, like a man who had slept well all the time. The very first thing he said was that of all his travel impressions one thing had particularly struck him. The German public was shut off from the outer world as though by an iron curtain, and totally unaware of the true situation. But the day must come when the curtain would be raised. Then he began his account, in the spirit of a historian, or of a famous surgeon who, after an autopsy, exposes the inadequacies of lesser colleagues in the practice of their art.

"I will tell you how things stood in Italy. I maintain that if at the end of July or the beginning of August, at the outset of the war, Austria had made the concessions to the Italians she was ready to make now, when, of course, it was too late, Italy would have come in with us. Further—if Vienna had



offered these concessions at any time between the beginning of January and the middle of May, Italy would have remained neutral. Unfortunately Vienna was constantly telling us that the Italians were simply out for extortion, that we must not allow ourselves to be intimidated, and that we were exaggerating the danger. Even before I left for Rome I had had private news from Italy which seemed to me to indicate that negotiations were under way between the Italian statesmen and Great Britain. I felt certain that nothing more could be done along the old line of policy of the Wilhelmstrasse, that a new basis had to be found; accordingly I made much more definite play with the possibility of a cession of the Trentino. I do not know whether you have met Count Berchtold. He is a *grand seigneur*, an altogether charming man, a great 'cavalier,' as the Viennese say, but politically rather inadequate. He asked for an audience with Emperor Francis Joseph, and told him he shared the view that there was nothing for it but to give up the Trentino. His view, and he was entirely right, was that Austria-Hungary was engaged in a life-and-death struggle against Russia, and that she might as well throw up the sponge if she could not settle with Serbia; and in such a situation the few hundred thousand inhabitants of the Trentino (most of whom, in any case, were not German-speaking) did not matter.

"Emperor Francis Joseph replied: 'No, I will not cede the Trentino, I will not give the Italians anything at all,' and Berchtold said: 'In that case, Your Majesty, I beg to ask you to relieve me of my post, for I must hold to my opinion.' The Emperor would not hear of this—'No, in the midst of the war, impossible,'—but two days later Berchtold received a little casket containing the Order of St. Stephen and a

gracious personal note from the Emperor assenting to his resignation. Berchtold said to himself: 'So much the better. Now I can hunt my stags again without worrying, and watch my race-horses doing their morning gallop,' and took his departure, thoroughly content.

"Now came Burian. He went to the German G.H.Q., and there he was told that there was nothing for it, the cession of the Trentino was absolutely necessary. He quite agreed, and was given the Order of the Black Eagle. But when Tschirschky—I don't think I am committing an indiscretion if I say that our Ambassador is no Talleyrand—went to see Burian in Vienna, to pursue the matter, Burian replied: 'The Trentino? Entirely out of the question! We will not hear of it.'

"The Italians had agents everywhere, and learned of this; there followed two or three newspaper articles refusing any sort of concession, and still more annoyance was given by a very unfortunate bit of talking by Monts—with all the lack of political *judicium* that Monts has always displayed. At the same moment Macchio, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, said to friends in Rome: 'The Italians are cute, but we're cuter, we're promising them anything and everything but they'll get nix.'

"Sonnino asked me what about it, and I got out of the dilemma as best I could—'*Ce sont des potins*, just club gossip; Emperor Francis Joseph has never yet broken his word; you must be content with the German guarantees I shall get you; just give us time!' But he replied: '*Je ne veux pas être le dindon de la farce*, I have no wish to be fooled,' and from then on he was suspicious and convinced that he was not going to get an honest deal. Have you ever seen him? He is not a bad fellow, there is no harm in him. He is a hermit, living entirely

in seclusion. He reminds one very much of Holstein; both of them, too, were in love with a woman for half their lives. Since the woman he loved died, Sonnino has withdrawn entirely from the world; he avoids all social intercourse. After this there was nothing more I could do but drag matters out. On April 20 I received a telegram from Bethmann: 'Falkenhayn asks you to gain four weeks' time. On account of battle Carpathians.' I burned the telegram. In my notebook I wrote: 'April 20.' Instead of the four weeks I gained five."

I asked him then whether, while in Rome, he had met his former friends Jules Cambon, Barrère, and the rest of what were now the enemy Ambassadors. He replied:

"You have no idea in Germany of the hatred that envelops us. The hatred is simply appalling. I passed Rennell Rodd in Rome, and we just nodded. I felt sure he did not at all like passing on without speaking. My old friend Barrère, when he saw me, just waved his arm" (Bülow copied the gesture) "—there was something very pathetic about it—as though to say, 'Everything is at an end between us as long as we live.' "

After that I felt it was useless to ask about Jules Cambon. Later on I drew Bülow's attention to a passage in Poincaré's memoirs, in which he mentions that Jules Cambon sent warning letters to Paris before his "friend's" arrival in Rome, letters that revealed no excessively friendly feeling. But Bülow was fond of bestowing the title "friend" on famous foreigners. He would speak of "my friend Tittoni" and "my friend Francis Charmes." Needless to say he was too shrewd to have any illusions about the strength of these friendships; he merely liked to surround himself with the aura of international intimacies. He used to call foreign

statesmen and other eminent personages his friends in the same way as, at a still more exalted level, monarchs call one another "dear Cousin."

He went on then to talk of the German people, who were magnificent, full of heroic confidence and enthusiasm, but so completely unconscious of everything that had happened and everything that was going on in the outer world. Bethmann, he said, had no definite plan; he was allowing himself to be carried on by events, and vacillated also on the question of annexations. The princess came in, looking already a good deal better. She told me how unhappy her old mother was, and I complimented her on the fact that Prince Camporeale, Bülow's brother-in-law, had been the only one in the Senate in Rome who had dared to vote against war. Bülow returned to his praises of the German people. It gave him the opportunity to mention how different was the behaviour in various quarters that would object to being counted among the "people:"

"If the most radical of the Social Democrats were to come to me and offer his help, I should accept it, in full confidence, so genuine is their feeling of national solidarity. But in other quarters, unhappily, how much there is of egoism, pettiness, envy and jealousy! Somebody said to a very high official:

" 'If this and the other thing happen, Prince Bülow will have no chance of succeeding in his mission.'

"The reply—it got round to me—was:

" 'Who told you we want him to succeed?' "

We went out together, and I accompanied the couple as far as the Wilhelmstrasse, where they were making a visit. The princess, now quite cheerful, asked me whether her husband's new panama hat was not really horrible. Bülow was actually wearing a panama, a hat that still rather recalls tobacco

plantations in a burning sun and the easy style of the American farmer; and it did not suit him too well. But he was coming to a period of his life in which he seemed deliberately to relax from stiff elegance when he went out, with broad-rimmed soft hats, and white scarves round his neck, in emulation of a type of historical portrait that has not the smallest element of the frivolous—Bülow à la Bismarck.

Once more he had left unsaid much that he wanted to say, and accordingly asked me to visit him again a few days later. This time he touched on a great many matters. Above all he was perplexed and concerned at the total ignorance in Berlin of general world opinion.

“I am astonished when I hear all the things people here are ready to believe, and how totally unacquainted they are with the situation. If a few cigarettes are exchanged between a couple of trenches it is swelled into an event; nobody has the faintest idea of the mass of hatred that really exists. A lady who came away from England told me that before the war the professional men there signed protests against war, and in many churches there were prayers for peace; now she says all that is completely changed, perhaps less in the lower classes than in society, which is full of determined resolution. Sonnino said to me once: *‘Avant le premier coup de canon tout était possible—beaucoup de choses étaient possibles—beaucoup de choses—qui sont devenues impossibles depuis que le premier coup de canon a été tiré.’*—‘Before the first shot, everything was possible—many things were possible, many things, which became impossible after the first shot was fired.’ That is one of the reasons, indeed, which drove the Italians to enter the war on the other side. They do not want to be included in the moral boycott declared against us, especially by England.

"Do you see any end of it all? I see none. And it is terrible, yes, it is terrible—the people are suffering, for all the wonderful courage with which they are enduring their sufferings—the wonderful courage. My wife's maid has a niece who had two sons; both have fallen. She has lost her reason and has been taken to an asylum; and her old aunt says: 'It has to be, I suppose, it is for the Fatherland.' I have been told of a man in Dortmund who had five sons at the front. Four of them were killed, and he sent in a petition for the fifth to be sent back to him. The petition was granted, but at that very moment the fifth son fell. Is it not terrible, and where is the way out of it? It must be a frightful feeling for those who have a responsibility, a frightful feeling."

I interposed that there was less chance than ever of finding a way out if annexations were insisted on, and the retention of all or part of Belgium; but, for all his laments over the war and the nation's sufferings, Bülow doubted whether it was right or possible entirely to renounce all Belgian territory. "It is a very difficult question," he said, "I really do not know how we could face the German people with such a renunciation, after all the sacrifices that have been demanded from them. Ballin wrote to me from Hamburg that the British have staked their honour on Belgium, and the Germans their heart. So it is. Ballin is an extraordinarily shrewd man, everything he says is very shrewd."

"Perhaps," I ventured to remark, "Herr von Bethmann knows how he means to get Belgium and still get peace."

"Ay, Bethmann—he goes about blaming everybody. He has been left in the lurch, he cannot help the unfortunate turn at the Marne, he cannot help the failure to take Calais, he cannot help our not yet being in Warsaw. He cannot help.

He has developed his own theory—it is Fate, Fate has ordained it all. He contends that there was no avoiding the war, because there was nothing that could be done against Fate.”

Bülow was now once more the man in the toga, tireless in the examination of the various points for public discussion, and rather fascinated with the interesting case as he collected and classified his points and generalized from them. But as he continually hit upon new points for the prosecution and continually enriched his speech with new embellishments, he was unfailingly interesting.

“Do you know of the telegram Jagow sent to Lichnowsky in July—the one in which he told him not to worry, Russia would not go to war? It is incredible, but they actually believed it. Jagow said the same thing to you, didn’t he? They had all persuaded themselves that the Tsar could give no support to the Archduke’s assassins, and that the Russian army was entirely unable to go into action for lack of guns and munitions. How could they imagine that the Tsar would go against the whole tradition of his house and abandon Serbia—how could they imagine that he would calmly look on while Austria occupied Serbia and robbed her of her sovereignty and her freedom? The Tsar would have run the risk of some adjutant general coming into his room and saying: ‘Your Majesty, it will not do, Russia will not permit it.’ He would have run the risk of having his throat cut. He was bound to fight the Austrians; otherwise his life would have been in peril, he would have been assassinated. Nothing but complete *inexpérience* could fail to see that. The Pope is an able man, a very able man, and one can get him to do a good deal by properly representing matters to him. One can get him to make a minor prelate into a

Cardinal. But it is no good asking him to hang above his desk a portrait of Luther. He cannot do it, and no more could the Tsar sacrifice Serbia. It was out of the question."

"Do you think the Kaiser also did not dream that war would come?"

"He did not. Of course he was told that the assassination must be avenged, and that the Austrians could only be advised to act with energy. You know the effect that would have on him, he would be all for their acting with energy, but he did not for a moment seriously suppose that war would come. It was all a long way off. Tell somebody that he will have to jump out of the window in a fortnight's time, and he will agree. But when it comes to the point he will decide to get down by a ladder."

The prince's philippics really call for a little comment. It might be pointed out, for instance, that he himself, by his support of the Austrians in their unnecessary annexation of Bosnia, had enormously roused Russian national feeling. Tsarist Russia had put up with this first blow; any further ones would be altogether beyond endurance. Bülow's mistake had already made the Russian organism extraordinarily sensitive. This, of course, does not exonerate Bethmann Hollweg and Kiderlen, who, for all their loud disapproval of their predecessor's policy, again and again imposed fresh indignities on Russia during the Balkan war, forcing her into continual retreat and further abandonment of her Serbian friends, until finally (with Jagow in place of Kiderlen, who had died) it was imagined that Russia could be forced to put up with the Austrian ultimatum and completely to sacrifice Serbia. For the very reason that, first in the Bülow era and then subsequently, Russia's feelings had been most dangerously roused, politicians with their eyes open and their



intelligence at work should have appreciated that the utmost caution was now necessary, that too strong a turn of the screw might now bring disaster. One more comment is necessary—that a wrong impression is easily conveyed in a very brief *résumé* like this of conversations that went on for hours. All one can take from them at any time is a few characteristic or summarizing sentences, the outstanding points, and the picture is thus liable to be as misleading as one of Switzerland with the mountains squeezed together. Between the mountains comes the level ground, the valley. For that matter, even the level plains in Bülow's talk were generally attractive and never entirely dry and barren.

The Rome mission was the only service demanded of Prince Bülow during the four years of war, and to the end of his life he had no further opportunity of political or diplomatic activity. Perhaps the right thing would have been to record only what he said about this short episode of his activity in Italy and not to add specimens culled from later war-time conversations. But when one comes to a field or wood full of flowers of a not very common species, one may mean only to pick a few but is sure to be led into adding to the bunch. I should like to set down two fragments of conversations which show still more plainly how difficult it was for Bülow to reconcile himself to not having been called upon earlier and to being set aside in the years that followed. In January 1916 he came again to Berlin after several weeks with his wife in Lucerne, and as soon as he arrived he described his impressions to me—always the same: universal hatred of Germany, and “not the slightest prospect of peace.” Then, on January 31, he thoroughly unburdened his mind.

“Bethmann has just been saying to me that if he could only have half an hour with Sazonov and Grey sitting opposite

him they could get peace. I said nothing; I did not want to dishearten him—he is often very pessimistic and it would be wrong to depress him still further. But I should have liked to get up and turn the key and then ask him: ‘Do you really imagine that that would be possible after all that has happened? You really have no idea of the passion, the bitterness that has mounted up, since the war started, in England and France; less so in Russia, but there as well. Get away from your work for four weeks and go abroad, to Switzerland, to Copenhagen, to The Hague. That will give you a different view of things from that which you get in the Berlin atmosphere, where the censorship colours everything and people shut their eyes to the truth.’ ”

He went on to talk again for some time about July 1914. He exonerated the Kaiser, described Moltke, the Chief of Staff, as a “slow-going, undecided man, always pessimistic, but a thoroughly decent fellow at bottom,” and said that everything was “*fad*,” dull, to Count Berchtold—“it is all so dull”—he was bored, and that was why he allowed himself to be drawn into the adventure. He touched laughingly on the folly—undeniable folly it was indeed—of the jealous little clique of tin gods who controlled Austria’s destiny, in refusing to consult any experienced adviser.

“Is it not enough to make one despair to think that everything that led to this ruin of millions of existences, to such vast sacrifice of life and property, to such infinite misery, inevitably undermining the well-being of Germany and Europe for a long time to come, lay in the hands, the very inadequate hands, of two or three men? Poor old Bethmann—I have a high opinion of him, but really he is quite lacking in *savoir-faire*; and that man Jagow—he was a disaster, imagining that he could get through with little *malices*, little

smartnesses; and the neurasthenic Stumm—I have been told that he said in the club that he would have Russia on her knees in three days. I am really not saying it out of vanity, but surely it might have occurred to them that ‘that man Bülow is an ass, but here he is close by at Klein-Flottbeck, and after all he has seen something of the world; there is no necessity for us to do what the ass says, but let us send for him and hear what he does say.’ Of course I should have gone, and I should have said to them:

“ ‘Do you see what you have done? If Prince Bismarck could be raised from the dead to face you all here, his first words would be: “How could you do such a thing, how could you make a Germany in the saddle into a Germany ridden by Austria?” ’ I should have said to them next:

“ ‘You declare that you did not know the terms of the ultimatum—you ought to have known them, and you ought to have known that no country, not even the Republic of San Marino, would swallow the contested paragraph in the Austrian ultimatum. You want to know how to get out of the mess? Accept Grey’s and Jules Cambon’s proposals; or, still better, arrange a meeting at Copenhagen between the Kaiser, the King of England, and the Tsar, as Ballin advised you to do. But do not imagine, if you will not do either, that you can avoid war. Russia will not leave Serbia in the lurch. France, who sets such store by the *point d’honneur*, will keep her word with the Russians, no matter who has the decision, even Jaurès; and England will take her stand with the allies.’ ”

Prince Bülow had a liking for this rhetorical form of play with question and answer. In the cross-examination as he pictured it the unlucky Bethmann was steadily driven into a corner. Sometimes it would be the Almighty interrogating

the defendant, sometimes Bülow himself, and he found a diabolical satisfaction in clinching the evidence and tightening the noose.

We met again on December 18, 1917. In the meantime Bethmann Hollweg had fallen, and for a very short time Germany had a Chancellor named Michaelis—nobody could say why. Over tea in his little sitting-room in the hotel, Bülow told me with emotion how in Hamburg he saw a sick soldier lying on the pavement and with the help of another gentleman got the poor fellow on to his feet; then there came once more, by way of transition to the political section, general remarks on the distress and the courage of the nation. Shortly before this meeting of ours the peace resolution, Erzberger's work, an appeal to the enemy Powers, had been adopted in the Reichstag, and Bethmann, who then was still Chancellor, had taken the opportunity to make a speech which Princess Bülow rightly described as that of a good fellow; even her husband cordially agreed. We had all felt at the time, however, that this public demonstration in the Reichstag might create a good impression on opinion in Germany, but could make none whatever on foreign opinion, and Bülow went on now to state his objections to the method of open peace negotiation.

"When that witty Frenchwoman Madame du Deffand was told that a method had been discovered of artificially producing children, she said: '*Moi, je suis pour l'ancienne manière*'—'Personally, I prefer the old way.' And I personally prefer the *ancienne manière* in diplomacy. If I were Chancellor I should write to my friend Jules Cambon or my old friend Barrère—I should ask them whether they did not think that means ought to be sought of making an end of this frightful war and arriving at a reasonable peace."

He still clung to his idea of these old friendships, although Jules Cambon did not return his love and Barrère in Rome had warned him off; so that he was at least as much of an optimist as Bethmann, who had imagined that he only needed to have a talk with Grey in order to restore complete harmony.

"I was saying," he continued, "that if I were Chancellor—thank heaven I am not, and indeed you, my friend, did your best to prevent it. Believe me, I am not reproaching you: you probably saved my life, it would have been more than my health could stand, but just to consider it in theory, it interests me—would you really have thought it such a disaster if I had become Chancellor, and just why?"

During the political crisis I had hardly taken sides either for or against him, for virtually all parties and all sections of the public regarded him as an old amoral Don Juan of politics, and nobody but Stresemann was going about urging his recall. Obviously he would have been a thousand times better fitted for the office than pietistic little Michaelis, but nobody had dreamed of the bizarre decision to make a Chancellor out of that man.

"Your appointment," I replied to the prince, "would not have been a disaster, but I regarded it as an impossibility. You have against you the Kaiser's most intimate entourage, the Conservatives, the whole of the Left, and the Centre; and I do not think that Stresemann and a few National Liberals are sufficient support."

"The whole of the Left," he protested—"no, really, that is not right, I think you are mistaken there. I have good friends who wish me well not only in the Progressive Populist Party but, I assure you, among the Social Democrats. It is true that I have fought against the Social

Democrats. But quite without animus, only on practical issues, and I am the first to admit that in this war they have behaved splendidly—where should we have been otherwise, without our working class? And the Centre, too, are not against me; my own feeling, at all events, is exactly the opposite. Only yesterday evening my friend Erzberger had dinner with me, and there was nothing whatever to suggest that I am so repugnant to him.”

“But you have published your book during the war and tied yourself down to annexations.”

“Now, you see, there we are again,” he retorted with the cheerfulness of an imperturbable man of the world—“there we are again, just two good Germans. We Germans always hunt up what a man said or wrote last time, or long ago, and we are triumphant when we unearth an inconsistency. Tie oneself down—one never, never ties oneself down.”

“You know,” I said—“I have never made any secret of it—that there were many things in your policy with which I could not agree.”

“It must not be forgotten,” he replied, “that I was in a very difficult situation when I took over my office. I was to build up a navy, I had agreed to accept office on condition that I should work for this navy—and at the same time I was to maintain peace with England, although she was very disturbed by our naval programme. When Bethmann came the fleet had been built, and it was a much easier task for him to arrive at an understanding with England. I had to face King Edward, whose antipathy to the Kaiser was really formidable: Bethmann had to deal with Sir Edward Grey, who pulls far less weight and had no animus, indeed was full of good will.”

There followed a long historical discussion of the historical

past: of the British offers of alliance, of the attempt of William II, who was "sometimes touchingly simple," to inveigle the Tsar at Björkö into the most impossible of all treaties, and even once more of the denunciation, during Caprivi's Chancellorship, of the Russo-German Reinsurance Treaty, which Bülow naturally condemned, and which does, indeed, seem to almost all historical critics as an important link in the chain of errors. This examination of past events—very interesting, though it brought to light no further surprises—went on, interrupted from time to time by gloomy remarks about the present, until late in the evening. It would fill a whole exercise book if I were to give anything like an exhaustive account of all that Bülow said that evening—he was in particularly good form—and I will pass on to his view of the situation in Russia, expressed some months before the Revolution.

"The Kaiser," he said on the 7th of June, 1916, "is no longer for big annexations—this is entirely between ourselves, you know. In January he was still ready to take a great deal, he had big ideas, but now he has given them up. And Russia? I think we must certainly make our frontiers secure again, but too much would be dangerous. I know Russia, I have lived there, of course, and I do not think it is really possible to weaken her. There is a lot of talk among us of the Russian Revolution. I do not think there should be any counting on internal crises in Russia. Russian crises are like Russian novels—they just peter out, they have no proper conclusion. Do you remember the ending of *Anna Karenina*? The hero has toothache and goes off. That is the way Russian crises regularly end, toothache and finish. The Revolution raged through St. Petersburg, there was shooting in front of the Winter Palace, the Tsar saw the guns of the fleet at

Kronstadt trained on him—and a little later it had all been forgotten, and everything was going on as usual.”

Even just before the deposition of the Tsar, Prince Bülow was still of the opinion that everything would follow the usual course, just a bit of toothache; and he would generally add: “I know Russia really well.” He had no acquaintance at all with the emotions and forces at work among the mass of the people, whether in Russia or France; his knowledge was confined to diplomatic circles and readers of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in Paris and to the drawing-rooms in St. Petersburg. But it is certainly excusable that he had no belief in a Russian Revolution, and especially no prevision of Lenin’s tremendous victory: who among us can claim to be able to foretell earthquakes? Ever since that bite was taken out of an apple in Eden, the history of the world has consisted of events that happened because nobody dreamed that they would or could.

His views on the problems arising out of the war varied from time to time. What never varied was his opinion of the men brought into power after him, and of those renegades who had quickly established themselves in favour with the new masters—and of an adversary for whom he had a particular and especial hatred, Count Monts. In these conversations he let William II down lightly, though subsequently, in his *Memoirs*, nothing was too bad to say of the Kaiser; but it must not be supposed that in his retirement he had any friendly feeling left for the monarch. He never for a moment forgot how William had driven him, “the beast,” into the wilderness; he had only put his vengeance, so to say, into cold storage, saving it up for its due time. There was no foretelling, no foreseeing what might happen, in this matter as in any other: the Kaiser had the



appointment of his Chancellors, and it might be, after all, that he would bring himself even now to appoint Prince Bülow. The discreet course for the prince was to wait and see, and to take care not to ruin his chances, little though he wanted to return to office. He contented himself with quietly preparing the material for the *Memoirs*.

Among the problems on which his views after the war, like those, indeed, of so many of his contemporaries, were different from those which he entertained at a period when there was still room for great hopes and plans, was that of Belgium. It was only long after his approval of the invasion of Belgium that the recognition came that that step had been as disastrous politically as it was morally indefensible. In such questions only those could see perfectly clearly from the first moment, and could be immune from vacillations, who steered through the storm of passions with the calm security of settled principles. Such principles Prince Bülow had not.

Montaigne, who found unfailing comfort and contentment in returning again and again to the subject of his own personality, was always ready to stress his little shortcomings and weaknesses, like a laughing philosopher who is determined at all events to be thankful for the good things fortune has bestowed on him. At times he carried his genial self-mockery to undue lengths. Thus he declared that his memory was failing entirely, his store of recollections miserable, although everybody who is familiar with the *Essais* knows how he had always at command an inexhaustible reserve of illustrative anecdotes, curiosities of history, and quotations from all the Latin writers. He comforted himself for this imagined failing with the consideration that it is a great thing to be able to forget past

mortifications, and the further consideration that the man who does not remember everything he has heard and said is less likely to become a bore through discursiveness and garrulity—and, finally, is better protected, if he is aware of his failing, from retelling a story in a revised version with falsifications and new twistings to suit new circumstances. It was even more impossible for Prince Bülow than for Montaigne to get anyone to believe that he had a bad memory. He had a memory of the very first quality, a reservoir from which he could draw what he wanted at any moment without the slightest effort or strain. And, as I have already said, he was able to do this without tiring the listener. Only in the last years of his life did this gift begin to fail him at odd moments, to the extent that he might produce a story or a brilliant remark a second time in the course of a conversation. This would be no more than a brief inadvertence, and not a frequent one, and Bülow would sometimes notice it and laugh it away—"You will be thinking I have come to my dotage."

It is not so easy to generalize on the question whether a man whose memory does not serve him well, and who is aware of its weakness, is less likely to commit an unblushing distortion of the truth. Montaigne has drawn a distinction between gross, unflinching, incorrigible liars and those men whose iniquity goes no further than the many inventions of a lively imagination. These latter, he considers, must be constantly on the watch lest they be caught in the net of their inconsistencies. Bülow, however unflinching, belonged, of course, only to the second category. But he was never troubled by inconsistencies, never attached any importance to them, since, as he said himself, he had never "tied himself down."

No attempt has been made here—be this, too, said once more—to offer any criticism of Bülow's political work and ideas. During and after his period of office as Chancellor I had to devote plenty of attention to that subject, and I have had no desire to return to it. Such few remarks on politics as have been interposed in this record of conversations have been inserted only for the sake of clearness. One thing, however, may still be mentioned, because it perhaps gives a last finishing touch to the picture, to this spoken self-portraiture of Prince Bülow. On one occasion I questioned him about the technique of his oratory. As with all the German Chancellors, if he had an important speech, outlining a programme, to make in the Reichstag, it would be drafted in the Chancellor's office and the Foreign Ministry, on the basis of material supplied by the various Departments. But while some of the other Chancellors simply took over the draft, or made only slight alterations in it, Prince Bülow would carefully go over the arid official pronouncement, and take devoted pains to give it his personal touch. He would supply the fireworks. I wanted him to tell me whether he had evolved a recipe for those speeches which he made in the Reichstag debates without preparation of this sort. He was always at his most brilliant, coruscating and entirely in his element, when in replying to a speech, from Bebel perhaps, or Eugen Richter, he was speaking to all appearance without any sort of preparation. He had always ready for such occasions a store of apt quotations and telling points and phrases.

"When I had to speak unprepared like that," he said to me, "the best things occurred to me, of course, only during the speech. But I will tell you a secret—when I got up to speak I always knew my last sentence, the conclusion of my

speech." That is certainly an excellent method, and one to be recommended not only to all speakers, but also to all writers. How many novels, plays, essays, and leading articles betray the fact that the writer had no idea while he was at work of what he was working towards, no definite conclusion in view! It was characteristic of Prince Bülow that as a speaker he was always sure of his final effect—but not as a statesman. Instead of calculating the outcome of his actions with the same care, he usually relied optimistically on the inspiration that would unfailingly come, on his elegant dexterity. All that was needed was to find "*una combinazione*." In politics Prince Bülow would start out with a carefully elaborated manuscript. But he would end with one of those improvisations that look either like an unexpected bit of luck or like the strange and doleful progeny of necessity.

## II

### THE ADVERSARY

**B**AD or indifferent biographers always try to throw a glamour round their subject. They choose the man best suited to their purpose, one whose portrait has not yet appeared in thousands of reproductions like some hackneyed Madonna of Raphael; and their subject must then develop into a genius to whose eminence full justice has not yet been done, or at least, into a unique variation in the garden of humanity. "Consider," they say, "this great soldier of mine, this statesman, poet, revolutionary of mine—what would the history of the world have been without him?" And in all probability world history would have pursued just the same course, for good or evil, without him. He just moved a little sand from one small heap to another—and his biography shows him piling Pelion on Ossa. The record swells out, and instead of a miniature that could be welcomed into one's collection there comes a garish and colossal figure quite untrue to life.

Count Monts, while he was Ambassador at Rome, and still more after his retirement, was accounted the most interesting man in the German diplomatic corps. In his later years, it is true, he was the demigod only of a small circle: elderly priestesses enveloped him in the aura of their veneration; the older proficients in the craft spoke highly of him when some chance word recalled him; but to the younger generations his name was but a faint melody. It was not until

hissing jets of malignancy steamed over him out of the *Memoirs* of Prince Bülow, not until he was bombarded with rotten fruit from that inexhaustible cornucopia, that the reading public discovered him to have been a man who mattered. Bülow's *Memoirs* aroused indignation, and it was felt that the diplomat whom the prince pursued with such hatred, and who had returned the hatred in such full measure, must have been a splendid fighting animal, not the mere discredited mountebank of the *Memoirs*; and the honours of which his adversary was stripped were piled on him. Unhappily, Count Monts was not long able to take pleasure in the general condemnation of the dead Bülow. He had only had time to see the corpse thrown into the lime-pit when he himself died on October 18, 1930, at the age of seventy-eight. He, too, left memoirs, and historians wrote his biography, though only briefly, only by way of preface to his own record, which was pruned a little by its editors, who also pruned their praises. Later they published a collection of his letters after cautious and tactful weeding.

What gave Count Monts his reputation? Why was he regarded as an outstanding specimen in the aviary of German diplomacy? He was credited with having been wiser than the Berlin Government at important junctures, with having had a sounder judgment of situations and political trends and having combated mistaken optimism; above all, as is well known, while Ambassador at Rome he had continually, and, of course, vainly tried to disabuse Bülow and his unseeing associates of their insensate trust in Italy's reliability as an ally. All this was evidence of strength of character, of that civilian courage which is so much rarer than courage in battle. The courage to proclaim the truth, and the readiness to end his career for its sake, were qualities of

which not many examples were known. Had he not always dismissed with lofty indifference, with a wave of the hand, the question whether it was discreet to express a particular view? The editor of his Letters describes him as a "dauntless, often uncompromising monitor and forewarner." The writer of the biographical preface dwells on "the weaknesses of his temperament" and on "his antithetical character, his readiness to contradict," but he, too, calls him "an unheard warning voice." "This much is certain," he writes, "that he not only saw clearly but clearly laid down what Germany ought to do, and bitterly condemned what she did do."

But it is possible for statesmanly foresight and a spirit of candour to be possessed by those who have no gift at all of pleasing the drawing-room critics. Count Monts' home truths were not just arid admonitions, they did not bore people, they had the reputation of being amusing and spiced with wit, and when they were passed round, as they were at once by the favoured friends whom they first reached, the fact that a diplomat was able to be witty was universally welcomed. Count Monts was by temperament and inclination a man of pointed criticisms, a man "with a sharp tongue," an iconoclast, an amusing misanthrope. "He was liked and also hated for his cleverness," wrote his historian, and elsewhere: "Monts was always clever." His biting wit, the biographer added, could give mortal offence, and at Munich, at Rome, even in his favourite city, Vienna, remarks made without regard to the consequences brought him irreconcilable enmities. He was the Lucifer in the diplomatic angels' choir. Like Lucifer, another rebel of high descent, he was a splendid and elegant gainsayer. Guests who were told by a neighbour at dinner of caustic things he had said at Rome or Munich on various occasions, were on the watch for a new spurt of the

fascinating poison, for the matador's next stab. Sometimes they watched in vain, there was no spurt and the matador was tired, or more ready to attack a roast deer than a live bull. Sometimes I have heard him called a Voltairean, which probably meant, with some slight confusion of ideas, that he had Voltaire's "disintegrating" sarcasm. It was a comparison that betrayed an inadequate acquaintance in Germany with the genius of the mentor of Frederick II.

Some people claimed to know that Count Monts could have become Chancellor if he had wanted to. It was really no more than gossip, nobody had definite knowledge, and his depreciators met the statement with cold scepticism. But the Memoirs and the biographers' researches have put it beyond question that Count Monts did actually have a narrow escape from having to govern Germany. Not once but twice did his great moment seem to come, twice did Fortune, the treacherous goddess, stand at his door. In August 1906 he was taking the cure at the Weisser Hirsch, near Dresden, when Tschirschky, who was then Foreign Secretary, visited him on the Kaiser's instructions and offered him the post of Chancellor. Bülow was to be got rid of on account of the failure of the Morocco policy under his insufficiently strong conduct; Lucanus, the Head of the *Zivilkabinett* (the Kaiser's Private Office), was advising a change of Chancellor, and Monts was considered, not by Lucanus but in some other quarter at Court, to be the proper substitute. Monts declined, and says at this point in his Memoirs that he "felt neither physically nor intellectually equal to the post." It happened by good fortune that on that occasion the count was able to offer real evidence that his state of health would not permit him to accept the post: he had just undergone two minor operations.



In April 1909 he was threatened a second time with imperial favour. He had just taken farewell of the King of Italy, on retiring from the Embassy at Rome, when William II, then cruising in the blue Adriatic on board the *Hohenzollern*, accompanied by Prince Bülow, summoned Monts to Venice. There was a long and intimate talk, *tête-à-tête*, on board the imperial yacht. William II explained why he was compelled to dismiss Bülow and why he regarded Monts as the right man to succeed him. At last the Kaiser's "uninterrupted flow of speech" came to a stop, and the candidate for the Chancellorship, *malgré lui*, had an opportunity of stating his political views. He urged the annulment of the treaty with the completely unreliable Italy, and the cultivation of intimate relations with Great Britain; as the essential preliminary to this friendship he advocated drastic limitation of naval armaments and a break with the existing rigid ship-building policy. The Kaiser agreed entirely with his estimate of Italy as an ally (though he placed faith in her again and again up to August 1914), and in the end, according to Monts' account, agreed also, after a few objections, to the points in his programme concerned with Great Britain and with the navy. The Kaiser said later to Ballin, still according to Monts, that this was the course German policy was going to follow from then on, and that he meant to entrust its execution to Count Monts.

Nobody could seriously believe that this was the Kaiser's last word, or that he would keep to it; amid the Kaiser's quickly changing moods this concession would not outlast the moment in which it was made, and William II would never renounce the satisfaction and the glory of being the creator of the German navy. Anyone who recalls the victory of Admiral Tirpitz, in alliance with the Kaiserin, over

the unhappy Bethmann at the time of Haldane's visit will be well aware that when Count Monts put forward his fantastic demands he shut the door of the Chancellery in his own face. A little later he received an intimation from Berlin that His Majesty had unfortunately had to revise his ideas; in view of the confused parliamentary situation he had had to summon to office an expert in home affairs; Herr von Bethmann Hollweg was being appointed. Once more Monts remarks in his book that he would have been "neither physically nor intellectually equal" to the task; he adds, with what looks suspiciously like irony: "And how could I have controlled William II all the time, when in many things he was superior to me?"

Was the satisfaction implied here quite genuine? Probably there was an admixture of disappointment, and pride, that sensitive spot, had received a wound. It was said that Lucanus had advised against Monts' appointment: the count had acquired too much unpopularity in Munich and Rome, and his habit of upsetting people would interfere with the harmonious conduct of affairs in Berlin. Is that why Monts, in his letters, nicknamed the Head of the Civil Cabinet "the apothecary"? In any case, he ought to have been grateful, if not to Lucanus, at all events to the Saints—they had diverted the lightnings from his head to Bethmann's. St. Florian, as if in answer to the ancient peasants' invocation, had taken care that his house should be saved and that it should be his neighbour's that was fired.

The Saints watched benevolently at all times over Count Monts. He could count sixteen ancestors, back to Bertrand de Monts, who in the thirteenth century had been protector of the citizens of Toulouse. For his family was of French origin; his forefathers had served the French kings. His

grandfather Jean Jacques had fought in the Pompadour's army in the Seven Years' War, and had settled down in Germany in consequence of a love match—where money was. His father, Count Louis, saw his inherited Rhenish estates swept away in the flood of the Napoleonic Wars, and then followed the grandfather's example by acquiring new wealth at the altar; he became a member of the Prussian Diet, and secured a post in the Foreign Ministry for his son Anton. Anton Monts enjoyed himself for a little while as a young diplomat in Brazil; he stayed there just as long as it amused him, and then went in rapid succession to the most desirable posts, at Rome, Vienna, and Budapest. The time came when it was proposed, for a little while at all events, to send him to South Africa: he took offence, and refused to go. South Africa—that was not for him, that was for ordinary men, not for a man of genius with brilliant social gifts and sixteen ancestors. Count Monts sent in his resignation. But influential friends induced him to withdraw it. He need not go to South Africa; he could go as Minister to Oldenburg. He was soon bored with Oldenburg, and Bülow made him Minister at Munich.

So he drew trumps every time, well looked after and spared all the tedious episodes in the wandering life of a diplomat. He knew nothing of a modest sparrow's laborious hopping after crumbs—his was an eagle's flight. From Munich it led him to Rome. And when he had had enough even of Rome, had made himself sufficiently disliked at the Italian Court and by the members of the Government, and had won ample reciprocity for his unconcealed distrust, he followed the family tradition, at fifty-six, by marrying an immensely rich lady who was also admirable in herself, a widow, no longer young, of the Haniel family, who was able

to offer him at her country house, Schloss Haimhausen, near Munich, a truly princely place to which to retire. He was granted in his life his every wish, everything that suited his taste and his inclinations, one long succession of first prizes in life's lottery—and, to crown it all, lost the throw for the Chancellorship.

If it is asked what he did, with what successes in statesmanship, what clever moves and manœuvres he established his title to all this astonishing preferential treatment and to the conferment of the highest honours and distinctions, truth compels the answer that in his career there were few achievements, few victories. Not until he was Minister at Munich is there anything at all to show. There he entered actively, alive and keenly interested, into the settlement of relations between the Reich and Bavaria; his antipathy to Bavarian clericalism was a stimulus rather than a hindrance to his activities. In his reports from Rome he shrewdly and convincingly revealed the unreliability of the policy of the Rome Government, giving graphic and thoroughly well-informed accounts of the steadily growing estrangement from the Triple Alliance, for which there had never been any genuine warmth of feeling, the dependence of the peninsula, with its long coastline, on Great Britain, and the admitted and unadmitted aims and aspirations of Cabinets and parties; but as a rule he contented himself with describing the situation, and with offering criticisms and warnings; there is scarcely a trace of active efforts to stem or influence the course of events. His French colleague and rival Barrère was particularly active. Count Monts was merely an on-looker, a keen and competent critic, commenting from the stalls on the various actors, and sometimes supplying material of use to intriguers and scandalmongers. He was

undoubtedly right in his view that the game was lost. But his activities went no further than the incessant repetition of this view. Occasionally he recommended closer association with Turkey in place of any renewal of the treaty with Italy. There was nothing brilliant about this suggestion. The Balkan wars soon showed that Turkey's fighting powers had been enormously overrated by the German instructors, and nobody could reasonably desire an alliance with her unless he regarded an understanding with Russia as out of the question (as, indeed, Monts did), and also was ready (as Monts was not) to come into conflict with Great Britain.

On one occasion, however, in another political arena, Count Monts took an active part in events and had a positive proposal to make. This was in the course of the Morocco affair, before the Algeciras Conference, which he rightly regarded as a fatal device, a ghastly mistake of his friend Holstein's. Delcassé, hunted and encompassed on all sides, already doomed to disavowal and disgrace by his own Prime Minister, Rouvier, and searching everywhere for help, set his friends in Rome, through a chain ending with Luzzatti, to offer Count Monts the role of intermediary; the Italians declared that Delcassé was ready to make immense concessions. He was said to be prepared to partition the Moroccan spoil. It was a bird-catcher's trick. Obviously there would have been substantial changes in the plan between the first non-committal suggestion from the ostensible negotiator and its working out at the conference table; obviously Great Britain would have demanded protection for her interests; obviously Morocco would not have been partitioned, and nothing would have happened but the bursting of Germany's soap-bubble. Strange to relate, Count Monts took this offer seriously and agreed to mediate with

Berlin. Holstein, exasperated, had been launching hot denunciation against every opponent of his mistaken policy, and this time he had reason for it. Not that Count Monts was at once labelled a traitor—the reward given to me for my criticism of Bülow's and Holstein's Moroccan adventure. That title, bestowed in Germany from time to time on those who proclaim some definitely banned truth, would have been too crude for an Ambassador with sixteen demonstrable ancestors. Sixteen ancestors, or even fewer, mitigated an offence and encouraged discretion. A pebble may count for a mere pebble in one man's hand and a precious stone in another's.

It was only with reluctance that William II had allowed himself to be dragged into the Moroccan adventure; afterwards he disclaimed all responsibility for it; and the fact that Count Monts had also disapproved of it became later a useful argument in his favour. But the thing that did him most service with the Kaiser and the favourites at Court was the notorious fact that the friendship which had united him with Prince Bülow had changed into bitter enmity. He admitted that he owed a great deal, almost everything, to Bülow, and his gratitude, coupled at first with unbounded admiration, lasted into the first years of Bülow's Chancellorship. Then the admiration began to fade, and the gratitude was subordinated, not, of course, without sincere regret, to the higher interests of the truth. Monts persistently reported his view of Italy and of the policy of alliance with her. Bülow grew irritable. And now his critic saw what even strangers who had no access to the official documents could see, the long series of blunders of this era. The person once adored lost all his fascination; he now seemed shallow and vain, unoriginal in his ideas, really a charlatan; even his

jewels of culture were no longer dazzling. Recognition was still granted now and then to his "undeniable gifts as speaker, courtier, and parliamentarian," his "art of handling men," and his "skill in extricating himself again and again from awkward situations by a wriggle or a piece of disingenuousness"; but the final summing up was a phrase taken over from Holstein—"une vieille cocotte."

When Bülow came to Rome, at Easter in 1908, and used rooms in the Ambassador's palace, the Palazzo Caffarelli, Monts feigned illness. Bülow visited him in his sick-room, with ironic expressions of sympathy: it must have been a pretty piece of comedy. The Ambassador received Bülow with a torrent of complaints, reeled off to him all his political sins, and declared that he, Monts, could no longer accept any share of responsibility for them. His visitor amiably remarked that it would not be right to try to detain anybody who was anxious to leave. A few weeks before this conversation the Count's marriage with Frau Haniel of Haimhausen had taken place. Each time that there came a turn in his fortunes which would have been hard and tragic in other people's lives, he was well padded to receive the blow; everything was softened and harmoniously ordered for him. In the autumn Count Monts learned that it had been decided to dismiss him; he forestalled the blow by sending in his resignation, and this was accepted in March, 1909. The *Daily Telegraph* affair had already come in 1908, and the Kaiser's displeasure had fallen upon Prince Bülow. Four months after he had got rid of Monts, Bülow himself fell.

During this period of latent crisis Monts' name must often have been mentioned, in the Kaiser's entourage, in praise and with meaning. Not that there came to mind, in the course of the scrutiny of the list of candidates and the con-

sideration of their services, any particular achievements on the Count's part. But Count Monts was not only Bülow's rival but his adversary, and it was this that mattered. This was his token, his role, the part assigned him in history—the antagonist in the historical stage play. When William II wrote in terms of exceptional appreciation at the foot of Count Monts' letter of resignation, and when he was considering whether to make Monts Bülow's successor, there was present all the time in his mind the thought that this man surely excels all others in his hatred and contempt of that faithless servant of His Imperial Majesty. Balanced against such feelings, even Count Monts' very awkward antipathy to Italy, and even his quite inadmissible views in regard to naval construction, seemed for a moment not so serious a matter. Count Monts was the adversary, as Patroclus was the friend, the legendary symbol of friendship. One must add in fairness that Count Monts was no mere Patroclus living in men's memory through reflected fame, and also that Prince Bülow's talents were of wider scope than the one-sided gift of Achilles.

It is, needless to say, only possible to conjecture what Count Monts might have achieved or failed to achieve if he had actually become Chancellor. He would have been unable to carry through his programme of naval limitation and of Anglo-German understanding. Bethmann Hollweg and his Foreign Secretary, Kiderlen-Wächter, came to the Wilhelmstrasse with the same programme, Kiderlen had carefully worked it out on Chancellery minute-paper, and then the fresh sea air blew every sheet off the table. And the catastrophe of the world war, would Monts—this is the essential question—have averted it, would he have had the insight and the foresight to evade it, would he have saved Germany



and the world from it? In his Memoirs he writes furiously of my publication, shortly after Bülow's death, of extracts from that letter (given in the next chapter) in which the ex-Chancellor detailed to me at length what he would and would not have done at the moment when war threatened, and the tactics and the expedients by means of which it would have been possible to maintain peace. In publishing the extracts I had expressed a doubt whether Bülow would have kept entirely to this recipe written after the event. But would Count Monts have slid into the war, have slipped into it by inadvertence? No, he would have jumped into it.

In discussing here the question of Count Monts' actual achievements, there has been no intention to belittle, still less deny, the qualities ascribed to him by his biographers and his admirers. The great entry on the stage can only be made when opportunity gives the cue. It is said that opportunity makes the thief, but can anyone deny that it also makes the statesman, the general, the captain of industry, the revolutionary leader? A general living in time of peace may have the talents of a Napoleon, but destiny denies him the opportunity to prove it. Even Bismarck would not have become such a legendary figure if Germany had attained her unity before him, and he had been left only the everyday work of defending and maintaining it.

I first came personally into touch with Count Monts in October, 1909, about six months after his departure from Rome. I had written to him and asked him whether he would contribute to the *Berliner Tageblatt*. He wrote on October 28th that he would rather wait a while, and said neither yes nor no. For a time at all events he would prefer, he said, to say nothing in public: he had been at his post, of course, until the spring. What should he write about,

indéed? "Say something nice about Italy, praise her loyalty and reliability, or her miserable organization?" Italy was only a Great Power in appearance, "she lacks the first essential for a Great Power, the ability to face another Great Power in her own strength." "The Italians have not the slightest intention of meeting their obligations as allies should conflicts come. Only an unteachable optimism like that of the Chancellor who now, fortunately, has gone, could fail to recognize this." Should he write of Bülow's stick-in-the-mud attitude towards Italy? This lamentable story, as lamentable as that of Bülow's policy toward Great Britain and France, would come to light in due course, but the public was not yet ready for the lesson. "The great mass of Germans still see in Bülow a statesman whose loss is simply irreparable." "But since the Triple Alliance is still in existence, and it is desired in Berlin at least to keep up appearances so long as it remains in existence, it would clearly do no good if the German Ambassador who has only just left were to write on the precariousness of our relationship with Italy or the shaky state of everything in the still very loosely knit Apennine kingdom. The only good things one could say would be about the progress of *northern* Italy, the industry of its inhabitants, and its wonderful fertility."

Nine pages, in a picturesque, strong, bold hand. I thanked him, without pressing him further, and there came another letter by return of post, this time eight pages, and on the very next day another eight pages. He had said neither yes nor no to my invitation, but he was really eager to say yes, his restless spirit demanded opportunities of expression. To wander in silence through the park of Haimhausen, to read the morning's political news and keep his criticisms to himself, was more than he could endure. What I had invited

him to do was what he was personally anxious to do. Soon after his third letter he came to see me in Berlin, not in the slightest, of course, in order to be persuaded, but simply to thank me personally for my invitation, and as a matter of courtesy. He was a handsome man, handsome by the best models, very tall but neither thin and bony nor with the slightest tendency in the other direction. His head was not very large in proportion to his frame. He had the fresh complexion of youth; his hair, already silvery, was thick and soft; his well-trained moustache turned down in a slight bow at the corners of his mouth. His glance was shrewd and observant. He had a well-shaped nose, though rather insignificant and lacking in character. The Count always complained of his health, closely watched it, and took the utmost care of himself, but there was no visible sign of ill-health about him. If only through his great height, he was bound to be a striking figure in any social assembly, indisputably a noble growth in the palmhouse of nobles, in figure and facial form and bearing indisputably an aristocrat. The long tradition of breeding of an old family did not find its end here in a decadent weakling.

Count Monts regarded himself as a Liberal, as he told me in our first conversation; he had already spoken of his Liberal outlook in his letters. In England he would certainly have been one of the Liberal lords. In the German Empire there had been an attractive group of liberalizing *grands seigneurs*, including Prince Hatzfeld, Duke of Trachenberg; Prince zu Hohenlohe-Oehringen, Prince Lichnowsky, Prince Schönaich-Carolath; and others. Most of them were very rich and therefore respected at Court, but they had little or no influence over the course of home policy. They looked after the advancement of their sons, nephews, and great-

nephews in the Horse Guards and in the diplomatic service; they might themselves go into diplomacy, like Lichnowsky, or, like Prince Hatzfeld, take up high administrative posts at an early age; they were members of the *Herrenhaus*, the Prussian Upper House, and had their circle of friends in the most exclusive clubs; they were lovers of independence and good food. They were not interested in the good works of the philanthropist or the Maecenas; the support of charities and the patronage of the arts, the building up of great libraries, and the like, they left to Jewish bankers and a few Christian industrialists. They lived with dignity on the revenues from their wide estates, but avoided ostentation, which was forced on them only at their hunting parties with the Kaiser as guest. They disliked and looked down on the mass of the junkers of the country east of the Elbe; the style of the great bulk of the junkers was not their style, and only a selected few were admitted, as a rare favour, to their intimacy; the rest were quite alien to their world. They had not the interest in culture of many French and English persons of their rank; but the type of robust gentleman who had only just got into the habit of squeezing into evening dress was not to their taste, and the junkers with their country ways, His Majesty's *triarii*, the gentlemen with little green hats, were decidedly robust. They made vigorous use of their elbows, spoke with plenty of self-assurance in Ministers' rooms, and paid little attention to the *grands seigneurs*.

As for Monts' liberalism, it was less realist than the progressive conservatism of Prince Hatzfeld, much less subversive than that of the "Red Prince" Carolath, and decidedly tamer than the ideas of Lichnowsky, who often assured me in his temperamental way, full of strange illu-

sions and glancing at me in mute inquiry as to his chances, that he would only take over the Chancellor's office if he were permitted to endow the German people with a parliamentary system on the English model.

Count Monts now began to send me articles in fairly quick succession. Most of them appeared, some went back to him, and he was never offended by a rejection, or at all events never showed that he was; he was easy to deal with, much more amenable in this new field than in political activities. His articles were well-knit, objective, well-informed, weighty, and at times of intrinsic importance, but it cannot be said that they had any particular attraction of style or eloquence or originality of expression. His Memoirs also are inclined to be dry, and the men and women admirers who went to them for examples of their idol's brilliant cynicism came away empty. If the articles had been written by anyone of less eminence, and still more so if they had been merely the work of an ordinary journalist, the majority of them would probably have attracted no attention. What gave them their value was the name, the authority of the name. The waters of the Nile, the Ganges, and other sacred rivers, differ in no way from those which flow in the beds of more ordinary streams. But it is the Ganges, it is the Nile.

The subject on which Monts and I were entirely at one was that of an understanding with Great Britain, which was only to be attained at the expense of the ambitious German naval programme. I had begun some time before to carry on a campaign in this sense with the secret advice and assistance especially of Admiral Galster, Admiral Tirpitz's most resolute opponent, and I was very glad to have the valuable reinforcement of Count Monts' voice in this campaign.

He invited me to Haimhausen, and I went there one July.

The fine old *Schloss* was built by the Italian Zuccarini in the eighteenth century for a certain Count von Haimhausen, and when the time of the great industrialists came, long after the Rococo period, it was bought by the Haniel family. The park, with its broad stretches of grassland, is magnificent; an imposing avenue of limes leads from the house to the garden gate. An undulating landscape formed the background, thoroughly South German in its simple, intimate, peaceful outline and character, such a picture of nature as Ludwig Thoma used to paint, in enchanted isolation from human passions and hatreds. In the house were long suites of rooms with furniture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with huge monastery presses, everything tasteful and untroubled by the pernicketiness of novices afraid of any infringement of rules of style. A reading room; newspapers and periodicals carefully collected and arranged on a long table for the master of the house. A portrait of Count Monts in middle age, by Angeli. Few other pictures of interest, though two or three by Dutch painters were worth notice. But good pieces of old Augsburg silver, to which Monts drew my attention.

The Countess was ill and did not make an appearance; she had become an invalid soon after her marriage with Monts, and was partially crippled. Her sister presided at lunch. A brother of Monts was also there, a pensioned major-general; he was gruff at first and inclined to stare suspiciously at me, but unbent later and talked away genially. In the afternoon I went with Count Monts to Munich. On the way he told me that he had made joint representations with Wolff-Metternich to the Kaiser about Tirpitz, but the Kaiser had curtly replied that he did not want any interference in defence matters. Monts went back to the time of his

attempt at mediation in Berlin before the Algeciras Conference, at the request of Delcassé and the Italians. Delcassé had indicated readiness to give up Casablanca and Mogador to Germany. I told him that similar hints had been given to me at the Quai d'Orsay to pass on, but I had always suspected that Delcassé was counting on a British veto and that it was only for that reason that he was so generous. Count Monts objected that Delcassé would have run the risk in that case of giving offence to Great Britain by his offer.

On October 11th in this same year, 1913, his wife died peacefully, after sufferings no physician could cure. Her husband had devotedly watched over her. A little time after her death he wrote to me thanking me for my letter of sympathy; there was this passage in it about his marriage and his own future:

"Perhaps Count Hutten-Czapski has told you what an admirable woman in every respect my wife was. I learned her quality when I saw how she tended her first husband. It is quite true that the first purpose of my marriage was to assure a care-free evening of my life. But the marriage of prudence developed into the most intimate relationship. Now I must pass through the last stage of my earthly journey in loneliness, and I do not even know where I shall settle. Haimhausen is entailed, and with the best of wives I also lose this beautiful home. The heir wants me to stop here, as he intends to continue his diplomatic career. But whether and how that could be arranged will have to be discussed on his arrival here from America."

The heir, Herr von Haniel, Minister of Legation, turned over Haimhausen to Count Monts as a residence; the question of ways and means was quickly solved on generous terms.

For another seventeen years, until his own end, Count Monts was able to reside in the *Schloss*, which made a good setting for his tall figure, and to continue to enjoy the aristocratic comforts of life, to which he had grown accustomed and the loss of which would have been difficult for him to endure.



### III

#### A REJOINDER

PRINCE BÜLOW did not frame his letters for the purposes of a professional writer, and wrote only rarely, with the idea that they might one day be published. But, quite apart from his sense of a well-turned phrase, he had so strong a feeling of what he owed to himself that he never formed a sentence that could not stand the scrutiny of the sternest of critics. He was always conscious of his quality of statesman, and wrote his letters with a self-confidence to match; and this gave them, amid all their graces of style, a weight that commanded respect. In only one class of correspondence was he weaker—in love-letters. When, in the last volume of his *Memoirs*, he tells of amorous experiences, describing a meeting on board a Rhine steamer and a night of love with the birds singing outside the windows, he achieves an unintended effect of the comic. There is a type of man, stately and handsome, who is unimaginable on Romeo's rope-ladder. Prince Bülow was a fascinating conversationalist, but when one reads his description, written so poetically in his old age, with such pride and such fullness of detail, of two or three ordinary youthful assignations, one is not impressed. Historians tell us that King Frederick I of Prussia took the widow of his groom of the chamber to be his *maitresse*, and made her Countess von Wartenberg, simply because he wanted to copy in every respect the splendour of Louis XIV. The King was a man of unblemished

moral character, and his intimacy with the lady, we are told, never extended beyond a stroll with her in the palace grounds; but he felt it essential to his glory to have a Madame de Maintenon like his great cousin in Paris. We need not assume, however, that when Prince Bülow, in the book he wrote as a contribution to world history, dwelt at such length on two or three roses long desiccated, it was merely because Talleyrand was also famous as a friend of the ladies.

Leaving out of account this slight shortcoming, it must be said that Prince Bülow possessed in a degree shared by scarcely anyone else in Germany, and certainly by no other Minister or politician, an appreciation of the grand tradition of epistolary style and the capacity to maintain that tradition. And when he was describing a political situation or defending his policy, his letters had the beautiful clarity of the Latin style and were free of excessive ornament. When he was moved by the importance of his theme, when he wanted to elucidate a chapter of contemporary history, to demonstrate the rightness of action he had taken, to convince his correspondent, his sentences had a directness and swing and a noble simplicity, and were ranged one after another in the clear perspective of the pillars of an ancient temple.

In the first months of 1915, when he had gone to Rome to try to keep Italy out of the war, he sent me confidential letters by the Embassy courier, in which he gave me very full information about the state of affairs. Our correspondence often turned, just as our conversations did, on what he had done or omitted to do as Chancellor, and in combating my views and answering troublesome questions he showed great patience. For more than ten years this interesting game was played without ever a ruffling of tempers. We

differed also over the German "war aims," over the demand for annexations, but with no visible ill-feeling.

In the first half of 1915, personages active in public life had recognized the necessity of organizing a counter-movement to the violent campaign for annexations carried on by the heavy industries, their parliamentary mainstays, and their recruited university professors. After negotiations in many quarters a committee, of which I was a member, was formed under the presidency of Prince Hatzfeld, and a declaration I had drafted was sent for signature to all those on whom we counted and whose names would be of service. Shortly afterwards Prince Bülow came out publicly as a supporter of the policy of annexations. It is impossible to say whether he was partly moved by the desire to secure the allegiance of the nationalist elements, whom he may have considered to be the stronger, and to bring his successor, who was already being denounced as a weakling, into still further discredit. In reply to a letter he sent me in July I told him that, as he knew, his standpoint was not mine, and I expressed my regret that the annexationist newspapers would now be able to make use of his name, as they would be delighted to do. His only reply, a few days later, in his next letter was: "The thing that matters now is not so much whether General Bernhardt might not have written his book better and General Keim have spoken better on one occasion or another"—I had made no mention either of Bernhardt or Keim—"as whether and how we can arrive at a peace acceptable to the German nation and in any way adequate to its heroic efforts and heroic sacrifices."

Such small incidents were steered past without visible damage, and serious conflict came only in 1925. I had been well aware that I was heading for a reef, but there was no

way of avoiding it. In 1925 there appeared my book *Das Vorspiel*, in which I described the Germany of William II, or, rather, Germany between the opening of the century, at the height of her glory, and 1910, a date at which her star no longer seemed so radiant. These were the ten years of the Bülow era, and in part also of Holstein's rule, and in the course of them Germany's international situation had greatly changed: she had allowed herself to be pushed out of a position of triumphal power, the happy position of the widely courted, and had become almost isolated. Throughout that decade I had been a vigorous opponent of virtually all the enterprises of Bülow's regime, of every stage in his policy. Could I now, because my relations with Prince Bülow as a private individual had become very pleasant, change my view or even soften it and wrap it up gently in cotton wool?

When *Das Vorspiel* appeared, Hans Delbrück, Haller, and other historians lavished on the book a praise which scholars do not readily accord to the work of a non-member of their craft. But almost all of them—some because, like Haller, they hated Bülow, and others, like Delbrück, because they loved Bethmann Hollweg—found fault with me for treating Bülow too well, for permitting too much play to my sympathy and painting too friendly a character-study. Bülow himself thought differently, and, I must admit, with good reason. He was deeply offended to find so unsatisfactory a yield from all the information he had given me and all the long discussions we had had in conversation and correspondence. He had always said, of course, that differences of political opinion could have no effect on personal feelings, and had expressed himself as glad to fight out these differences; but it was naturally one thing for his partner in these

discussions to bring up his old objections in a private tête-à-tête, and quite another to print them. It is for that that I have chosen thee, and given thee my blessing?

He was silent for some time—for several weeks. Then I received a letter from him from Rome: thirteen quarto sheets of typewriting, full of a wrath sometimes coated with sugar and sometimes of undisguised bitterness. A letter almost as long, and almost as fascinating in its polemical style, as a speech of Cicero. Those passages in it in which Bülow stated what he would have done in July, 1914 to prevent war, if he had been in power, I published after his death.\* I will give the whole letter here, and I choose this particular letter from a fairly voluminous correspondence because, with all its snaps and thrusts at me, I like it even better than the lucid philosophical comments on affairs in general from the Villa Malta.

Rome, Villa Malta.

February 7, 1925.

DEAR HERR WOLFF,—

You know how when one has nothing to do one seems to have less time than ever. So it is that I have only now got to the book you sent me some while ago. First of all, I must thank you, not only for sending me *Das Vorspiel* but also for the kind words you sent me with it. My first impression after carefully reading your essay is appreciation of your style. I have all the more pleasure in this appreciation since there is scarcely any country at this day where writing is so mediocre as with us. Some of our writers confuse thoroughness with dullness and think pedantry is the same thing as conscientiousness. Others write with a sloppiness of expression that would scarcely be tolerable from amateur politicians sitting over their evening tankards. Still others are so mannered and affected that in twenty years' time their prose will seem as unreadable as the works of the second

\*The translation of this part has been taken from *The Eve of 1914*, by Th. Wolff, published by Victor Gollancz.

school of Silesian poetry are for us to-day. Your style delights me! Buffon says: "*Le style c'est l'homme.*" (Excuse the quotation—at least there is no preciosity about it.) He does not say that a brilliant style makes an unanswerable book.

You reproach me with having done nothing during my period of office to secure the introduction of the only form of government of which you approve, the parliamentary form. It is a funny thing, and a bit hard on you, that I should have read what you say at the very time when we are suffering from a crisis that has hung everything up for several weeks. I am (unhappily) an old man, and have seen a good deal. But I venture to assert that there never has been a crisis so atrociously mishandled, so stupid and absolutely ridiculous. I was explaining it a few days ago to an old American friend. "I think," I said, "there are few even among the educated Germans who could give the names of all the Chancellors who have governed my dear country since the November Revolution." To say nothing of the Ministers who in the past six years have entered their names in flaming letters in the annals of history, and who subsequently have written commentaries on the world's history either in your paper or in the *Vossische Zeitung* or the *8-Uhr-Abendblatt*, never forgetting to add after their esteemed names "ex-Minister" or "former Secretary of State." "A detail," I hear you say. Not in the least. Such details are the *documents humains* which characterize a whole period. Even those who consider that the introduction of parliamentary conditions into Germany was desirable will agree with me that such a transformation ought to have been made gradually and with caution. "*En fait d'histoire il vaut mieux continuer que recommencer,*" a great thinker has said: In public affairs continuity is better than a fresh start. For the very reason that I thought there were many things among us in need of reform, among them the Prussian franchise, I hoped during the coalition period to work gradually in the direction of reform, by bringing parliamentarians into the Government and in other ways. Where did I meet with the most violent opposition? From you, dear Herr Wolff! You were still very young (how charming a defect!) and an idealist (almost more charming still), with no cares to

restrain you, when you entered the path of public life. And nothing was so high and nothing so distant that the pinions of your schemes could not bear you thither. With the thoroughly German motto of "All or nothing," you carried on the most relentless opposition to the policy I was then pursuing. Remember that politically ripened nations prefer the path of compromise and of gradual progress. In any case, I have now been waiting in vain for more than six years to see any approach to a tolerably satisfactory parliamentary life in our freest of all republics. I should be glad, very glad, to drink a toast to freedom—if only your wines were a little better! Criticism has always been the German's strong point. When Bismarck returned to Berlin in 1862 after a long stay abroad, he wrote to his wife that he would like to know who it was that set into circulation the legend of the German's modesty. Every German, he said, and especially every Berliner, was convinced that he knew all there was to know about everything, from catching fleas to high policy. And now, on your honour, if you, keen critic and brilliant writer as you are, were to put gently under the lens the (great) men of the present day, a Fehrenbach or Wirth, a Bauer or Müller, or, indeed, with all due respect, Friedrich von Payer or Herr Professor Dr. Hugo Preuss, would not the result be a much more amusing book than *Das Vorspiel*?

Like many Germans, you are more critical of your own compatriots than of other nations. The Frenchman was and still is more of a militarist and much more of a chauvinist than the German. The Englishman and the American are much more of imperialists. Gambetta was a great man in the eyes of most Frenchmen, because he had continued to resist the external enemy *envers et contre tout*, had resisted as long as he had a hand left with which to hold a Chassepot rifle—because he was a "bitter-ender" *par excellence*. It was for that reason that hundreds of thousands of Frenchmen gathered at his funeral; I was present at it. It was for that reason that his remains have just been reinterred in the Panthéon. Among us "bitter-ender" is a term of abuse. Gambetta, Clemenceau, all Frenchmen in power or of eminence, have invariably spoken of the army with hat in hand, with deep veneration, with passionate rhetoric. And what of us?

Let me mention, in all modesty, that I did not live "a short time" in France, but was there for six years on end, as Second Secretary, as First Secretary, as Counsellor of Embassy, and often and for long periods as chargé d'affaires. Even before being transferred to Paris I had repeatedly been in France, for months at a time, at Biarritz and Dieppe, in Auvergne and Normandy, in the Est and on the Côte d'Azur. I doubt whether there is a single Department of France in which I have not been for a time. I have spoken and written French since my childhood as fluently as my mother tongue. I had the honour to be intimately acquainted with Jules Ferry and Freycinet, Barrère and both the Cambon brothers, Gambetta, Galliffet; Comte Roger du Nord, Thiers' old intimate; Georges Pallain, the excellent fellow who for years was a Director of the Bank of France; and the worthy d'Estournelles, who paid me a visit in Berlin shortly before my resignation in 1909, and spent two evenings with us. *J'en passe et des meilleurs*—there were many more of the very best. I do not for a moment want to compare my knowledge of things French with yours, but please do not set me down in the category of that Englishman who was served with a tough mutton chop by a red-haired waiter in Boulogne and wrote in his diary: "The French people have red hair and cannot cook chops."

You are right in insisting that the Kaiser was never flattered, or only on rare occasions, by his military entourage or by the military element in general. In the army there was a manly and independent spirit. It was mostly the intellectuals, the professors, who flattered the Kaiser, and some, not all, of the artists. No one was more lavish and more subtle in his flattery than Professor Adolph Harnack. When I used to hear the elaborate flatteries, prepared with Attic salt, which he served up to His Majesty, I thought of the Greek Sophists who delighted the Persian satraps and later the Roman proconsuls with their art of exquisite *blandita*. That lamp-post Scholl, the A.D.C., a worthy native of Hesse-Darmstadt, said to me once after Harnack had been filling up His Majesty with his flatteries all the evening: "His Majesty's court parson has been piling it on to-night too thickly altogether! I want a drink. It makes me sick." Perhaps in your eyes Harnack is making up for it now. I



am pleased to see that he is just as busy now flattering the President—whose great merits I appreciate and entirely recognize. "*Non dimittit pellem suam aethiops senex nec pardus diversitatem*," as Gregorovius keeps on quoting in his splendid History of Rome. On the whole we may say that the spirit of the army was not only manly and dignified, but that almost without exception our officers were distinguished by good manners and an extraordinarily high level of education. I do not go as far as Harnack, whom I once heard telling the Kaiser that a Prussian captain knows more of the world and about everything in general than all the German scholars and intellectuals put together (a remark that highly amused H.M.). But, all in all, the army was far the best thing we had. The abuse of our "militarism" by envious enemies was, of course, simple hypocrisy. Our military strength was a thorn in their side. The very people who used to declare that the "militarism" and the "autocratic system" in Germany formed a barrier between us and other "advanced" nations, I now hear saying that as "Marxists" we were a permanent menace to Europe. "*Le socialisme est un danger permanent pour la civilisation et le Marxisme est une invention boche*," a Hun invention—that is the refrain now. The Frenchman has a good saying: "*Quand on veut noyer son chien on dit qu'il est galeux*." When a man wants to drown his dog he says it is mangy. The truth is that in France, in Italy, in Belgium, in England still more, and perhaps in America most of all, there is a pronounced nervousness, combined with an instinctive aversion, in face of socialistic ideas and experiments. It is being pointed out that the real Marxism, the genuine doctrine of old Marx, has led in Russia to complete ruin, to the most dreadful atrocities in modern history, and that diluted Marxism has led in Germany to a complete fiasco. After half a century, we are told, of violent agitation, accompanied by a great deal of damage and upset, nothing has been socialized except the Berlin tramways, and that brought them to bankruptcy. "*Un immense avortement*"—a vast miscarriage.

In detail I should like to add: In the Moroccan crisis I was mainly concerned to get rid of Delcassé. If he had not fallen, we should probably have had the war twenty years

earlier. *I wanted to avoid war altogether, and considered it entirely possible to do so.* I pressed for the Conference because I wanted to show that if great Powers can be brought together at a round table the acute danger of war can be removed. To this day I am of the opinion that if at the end of July 1914 we had agreed to a conference, if even at the last moment a meeting between the great sovereigns had been brought about, say in Copenhagen, the war could have been avoided. I have always fought the view that mobilization necessarily means war, a view recently put forward again by Hans Delbrück. After making such awful fools of us and of himself with his Polish obsession, Delbrück really might have held his tongue.

The Bosnian crisis did not have the consequences you attribute to it. It did not do lasting damage to our relations with Russia. Some weeks after the settlement of this crisis the Russian Ambassador called to confer on me the Order of St. Andrew with brilliants. He told me then that the Tsar and the Russian Government, in conferring this decoration, which was borne only by some of the older Grand Dukes besides myself, wanted also to give indirect expression to their lively desire that I should continue for a long time to remain Chancellor. On my resignation I received a telegram couched in the most cordial terms from the Tsar, and a very kind and appreciative letter from my old friend Isvolsky. Just about that time King Carol of Roumania sent me an Order which he had founded, and which until then had been confined to crowned heads, and gave expression to the same wish, that I might remain in office. The British Ambassador asked me in confidence whether it would be agreeable to me if either King Edward, who had been well inclined toward me personally for nearly thirty years, should send a direct letter to the Kaiser, or the British Government should send an official communication, expressing the lively desire for my continuance in office in the interest of Anglo-German relations. I declined these kind proposals, because in my view a German Minister should not be dependent either directly or indirectly on foreign favour or disfavour. On the day after my resignation Jules Cambon paid me a long farewell visit. I accompanied him to the door. On the way out he gave expression once more

to his regret that I was going. I was unable entirely to suppress a rather sceptical smile, and he repeated firmly and seriously that his regret was genuine, and that he had good reason for it. He had not always been in agreement with me. But there were not ten men in Berlin who knew their way about Europe. I was one of these few men. There were not five men in Berlin who knew and understood France. I was one of these very few also. I should have been an important guarantee for peace. The only people who accepted my departure with inward satisfaction were the Austrians.

I think there is scarcely anything more absurd than the *vaticinationes ex eventu* in which German "historians" have revelled since the unfortunate outcome for us of the world war. But I should like nevertheless to set down the following, and have no hesitation in saying that it represents the facts:

1. I should not have given Austria a blank cheque in regard to her action against Serbia, but should have demanded to be made acquainted beforehand with the particulars of the ultimatum. I should, in any case, when the ultimatum reached the Foreign Ministry twenty-four hours before delivery, have put a stop, with the utmost emphasis and decision, to the whole proceeding.

2. Under no circumstances should I ever have permitted the Austrians, after a hasty examination of the Serbian reply, to declare it inadequate, to break off diplomatic relations with Serbia, and to commence military operations. Serbia had accepted almost all the Austrian demands. We ought to have recognized that, with thanks for the wise efforts of all the Powers for peace, and to have recognized the Serbs' good will, and at the same time to have suggested that the two Austrian demands (very dubious ones) which Serbia had not yet accepted should be submitted to the Hague Tribunal for examination and decision.

3. I should not have let us declare war ourselves on Russia and France, since in doing so we released Roumania and Italy *ex nexu foederis*. That was a great piece of stupidity on the part of Bethmann and Jagow. Even our friends in Italy, who find excuses for us in other regards, saying that in the summer of 1914 we sinned out of simple-mindedness and not out of wickedness, are unable to explain to them-

selves this *lourde bêtise*. It is, indeed, difficult to explain, and always will be. Ballin has assured me that Bethmann insisted on our own issue of a declaration of war against Russia because he believed that that was the only way he could carry the Social Democracy with him: "Tsarism," which our whole Left hated, worked on them as a red rag does on a certain four-footed animal.

4. Needless to say, I should never have permitted our advance into Belgium, so long as Belgian neutrality was not violated by our enemies.

5. I should have insisted that our battle fleet should be brought into action on the outbreak of war at once and *à tout risque et péril*. I doubt whether I should have permitted the U-boat war. In no case should I have permitted it at the time or with the modalities which unfortunately were chosen.

6. In 1915 I should have taken advantage of Stürmer's appointment to come to terms with the Russians, for I should have been only too glad to let all their Poles and Lithuanians go. Never on any account should I have restored Poland. That was the greatest of the mistakes made during the war.

7. In 1916 I should have done my utmost to come to peace with Britain. I should not have permitted the Reichstag's silly peace resolution, nor the Kaiser's larmoyant peace letter to Bethmann. I should have put an end to the well-meant but clumsy doublings and capers and journeyings that Erzberger undertook in his childish, bungling way. But I should have sent a message to the English through a serious intermediary (the King of Denmark or the Pope, the King of Spain or of Sweden), at the latest before our last offensive, to say that I was ready to give up Belgium *nettement et clairement*, without any private reservation, without any restriction or any obligation on her part. I should also, if it proved unavoidable, have considered the question of a "deal" in regard to French Lorraine. In the event of there being no inclination at all for peace on the British side, a thing I doubt, we ought at least never to have allowed ourselves to be so absurdly taken in by Wilson, but ought to have kept a tighter hold at home, as was done in France, and to have fought to the knife. Worse things than we

endured after our capitulation could not possibly have come to us.

A few more small objections; do not put them down to exaggerated *akribeia*. Waldersee was not transferred to Hanover but to Altona. William II, after the dismissal of Bismarck, did not send his "full-steam" telegram to the Grand Duke of Weimar, but to Hinzpeter. In the treatment of the alliance question I was always in agreement with Paul Hatzfeld. He was more suspicious of the English than I was, and often came back in his private letters to the point that the British ships were a very long way off from Berlin, but the Cossacks fairly close. Have I told you that in 1898, when the agreement between ourselves and England over the Portuguese colonies had been concluded, I learned very shortly afterwards, through the indiscretion of a diplomat, not German, who had been a friend of mine since my youth, of the Treaty of Windsor, which the English concluded with Portugal immediately after coming to terms with us? You will not deny that that was a warning to exercise caution.

I have never collected phrases or ideas for my speeches, but since my youth I have entered fine and striking thoughts upon which I have come in reading, and here and there perhaps also in meditating, in a collection begun under the eyes of my father, a man of culture, a man who bore the stamp of the times of Goethe. Was that so very wicked? My father had a love for the *esprit orné*. In my public speeches I tried to show, in a country in which the talent for oratory is not great, that a speech need not necessarily be monotonous, tedious and unenlivened. Particularly in extempore speaking I had quite bright ideas. (I am saying this objectively, as an old man, past vanity.) Yet I remember an article in your esteemed paper, toward the end of my period of office, in which after some prolonged debates in the Reichstag I was called to account for insufficient thoroughness, impartiality, and seriousness. The article bore the heading "The Orator," and the mark of the mentality which the Englishman describes as "*boche*."

One more remark, *pro domo mea*, with reference to lines 6 and 7 on page 219. Ever since I have been in public life I have taken pains to be as courteous to political opponents

as to anyone else. At times Pan-Germans have complained of my politeness. On the other hand, I have had the satisfaction of being told by political opponents, to my pleasure, and in particular by Social Democrats, that they have never failed to recognize my urbanity, and for that very reason, even in hot political debates, they have had not the slightest personal feeling against me. *In specie* I feel sure that in relation to you, dear Herr Wolff, I have never departed from the due forms of social intercourse. Thus I doubly regret that slip. Such phrases seem to me to be unworthy of your pen. Permit me to hope that among other great and honourable traditions the Republic will not scrap good taste and tone.

And, by way of postscript. Phili Eulenburg did everything he could to get me appointed Secretary of State (much against my wish at the time). He did not want my appointment as Chancellor in 1900. His candidate was Prince von Hohenlohe-Langenburg, whose place he wanted to take as *Statthalter* at Strassburg, which was always his ultimate ambition. Phili was quite out of the question as Secretary of State, to say nothing of Chancellor, just as much so as Monts, Flotow, our good friend Lichnowsky, and various others. All these men would have been utterly incapable of facing the Reichstag. I have never been anti-parliamentary in the sense of desiring to restrict or circumscribe or in any way exclude popular representation. I shared Cavour's view that *la plus mauvaise chambre vaut mieux que l'antichambre*, the worst public conduct of politics is better than backstairs politics. Nobody was a worse flatterer of William II than Harnack, and nobody fawned over me with more exaggeration than Monts. I have many letters from him, from 1888 to 1909, in which he assured me of his love and veneration, his unbounded admiration, and, above all, his unshakable loyalty, with an exuberance and impetuosity unequalled by anybody else. Flotow, too, made a point of declaring to me that he not only honoured and admired me with his mind, but above all clung with his whole heart to his beloved chief. Flotow was not without a certain smartness, but much too fond of intrigue. As Ambassador at Rome in 1914 he was a total failure, and already in Brussels he had brought grist to the mills of our

opponents by his intrigues, *qui étaient des intrigues cousues de fil blanc*—tricks anyone could see through. I could say a good deal more about that, as about the Berlin Congress, the Reinsurance Treaty, and much else. I am not omniscient, as Mephisto said, but I do know some things (positively the last quotation!).

But I am horrified to see how I have run on. I have written you a *letterone*, as the Italians would say—a huge epistle. That is the fault of my charming secretary. She takes me down in shorthand as quickly as I speak, and transcribes on her typewriter more quickly still.

All I have written here is strictly confidential; please on no account publish this letter either directly or indirectly during my lifetime. Once I am spending my days in a better world, you may make any use of the letter that you think fit. I am sending it through a safe medium, which may rather delay its arrival.

With kindest regards from myself and my wife, and best wishes for your welfare professionally and at home, I am,

Yours sincerely,  
BÜLOW.

At the end of the typewritten letter Prince Bülow had added the greetings in his own hand. It was as though at the end of a far from cordial visit the caller turned back once more at the door and expressed by a grip of the hand the feeling that in spite of all there was no reason for not meeting again. We did meet very soon afterwards, and it was almost *wie einst im Mai*, almost "like old times." We kept in touch, and again and again Prince Bülow invited me, as he had done so many times in past years, to stroll with him through the garden of the Villa Malta. But when at last I went to Rome he had died a few weeks earlier, and his place knew him no more. There are many things I could say about his letter, but I will confine myself to a few words about the only painful passage in it, that in which he writes that at one point I had sinned against good taste. It is true:

I said at that point that when the Kaiser had indulged in certain unsavoury remarks and marginal comments Prince Bülow had wiped up after him, and this slip of the pen was no doubt inexcusable. Only it was not entirely true that Prince Bülow himself had at all times been careful for "urbanity" and faultless observance of good form in his judgment of other people. His Memoirs do not reveal constant care to avoid hurting sensitive and easily wounded natures, and the things he writes in his letter about the famous theologian and court chaplain Adolf von Harnack, who had been an intimate friend of his own and his wife's, but discreetly dropped them after the prince's downfall, convey only a faint idea of the lengths to which his rancour could go. As for any plans or attempts on Bülow's part to reform the Prussian franchise, still less to bring Members of Parliament into the Government, nobody ever heard of them so long as he was sunning himself in his high place as Chancellor. And it is only wisdom after the event that prompted him to write under No. 7 that during the war he would have "done my utmost to come to peace with Britain," and would have declared his renunciation of Belgium "*nettement et clairement*, without any private reservation, without any restriction or any obligation on her part." In spite of his excellent memory, he entirely forgot when he dictated this letter in the Villa Malta that during the war he had written the exact opposite to me, that he had said both privately and in public that it was impossible to dispense with annexations in Belgium, and that "we have to reckon now for as long ahead as can be foreseen with an England invincibly hostile to us."

But I should like to confine myself to these few non-polemical remarks and only to say now once more that



Prince Bülow stood out far above his rivals in the brilliancy of his verbal swordsmanship as in many other respects. To make play with quotations alongside Bülow would be to show up as badly as the possessor of one poor ring alongside a royal treasury; otherwise one might be tempted to make use of the familiar phrase about saying ungracious things with consummate grace. But I will dispense with any rejoinder primarily for another reason: it does not seem fair to append a critical note to a dead man's self-defence.

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## IV

### THE TRAGIC HOUSE

WHO has not discovered how useful a helper the nose is—how powerful a motor for the memory, to speak in the language of the machine age? It suddenly shakes the memory out of its dozing and jerks it back to vanished pictures, carries it away to the distant past. The sense of smell is touched by the breath of some substance, some environment, the characteristic aroma of the seen or the unseen, and one is wandering again across Sylt through pink and lilac heather, one is eating ptarmigan in a wooden hut on the snow-covered hills of Norway, or engaged in a polite and endless discussion with stall-holders in the bazaar at Tunis, or entering a hut between the Zermatt glaciers, or gazing at a sea of blood-red poppies on the hillsides around Corinth, or lounging in a deep armchair outside a café in Cadiz while Carmen goes by with a red carnation behind her ear. For Marcel Proust there rose out of the aroma of a cup of tea the whole picture of the days of his youth, the familiar country town, the patriarchal home, a whole population, just as the incantation in *Faust* materialized the form of Helen from an undulating mist.

Every time I went into a second-hand dealer's shop of the lesser sort the scent used at once to recall another building of a different order. This would not happen, of course, in the showrooms of one of those princely firms in the market for antique art, or in those palatial shops in which every

object is rare and precious, and posed with the subtlety with which a fashionable painter discovers in the features of his similarly antique millionaire patroness the charms her fee commands. No, the phenomenon occurred only in the dim and ill-ventilated lumber rooms piled up with modest samples of period furniture, ragged remains of crude tapestry, bead-studded ash trays, disabled Dresden china figures, paintings by unknown masters—unknown with good reason—snuffboxes and painted pipe-bowls. Here, where the air was thick with the smell of dust and moths and decayed wood and unbeaten carpets, one's thoughts turned unfailingly to a house of high historic importance, the palace of the German Imperial Chancellor, and one saw the rooms in which one used to wait until told that *der Herr Reichskanzler lässt bitten*, "the Imperial Chancellor would like to see you."

No doubt it was very different, under the gracious care of the princess, when the Bülowes lived in this house; I had no personal experience. In Bethmann's day, too, one had the impression that these rooms were attended to from time to time by a housekeeper. But after that, with the rapid changes of occupier, when new guests came to the Chancellor's palace with every train, as into a railway waiting room or a hotel, the last vestiges of personality disappeared, all that was left were the signs of degradation, and the visitor found himself no longer even in a well-kept hotel but in a rather desolate boarding house or a *maison meublée* whose owner had seen better days. Ultimately, of course, the new official building was completed next door to the Chancellor's palace, to be used first by that ascetic Franciscan, Brüning; here he received visitors with favours to ask or advice to offer. This bald, matter-of-fact, brand-new suite of offices, with

its smooth, polished walls that left the imagination starved, resembled the administrative buildings of a bank or shipping company; and it was so meagrely furnished as to suggest a determination to leave as little as possible to be taken away by the bailiffs whose appearance was regarded as certain. This rectilinear government box at least represented a hygienic advance, but up to the time of its ceremonial opening one went to and fro in the palace next door between massed odds and ends of furniture brought down from every store and attic, an indiscriminate collection of stuff from half a dozen different periods of style, imitation Louis Quinze, rickety Rococo, Empire style made in Germany. The pictures, "heroic landscapes," Biblical subjects of the "school of Palma *vecchio*," recent Academy exhibits alongside copies of Rubens, had probably been lent with the utmost readiness by a cynical museum curator. The *misère* of these rooms, uncared for, unaired, neglected, and given over to uninterested servants, smelt exactly like the little shops with the sign "*Antiquitäten*," the mortuaries to which poverty carries the last ornaments that graced its life. Whenever I see that sign, even before I enter the shop, I seem to breathe the peculiar, not easily definable atmosphere of that past period, and I hear once more the messenger saying in his listless official tone, "*Der Herr Reichskanzler lässt bitten.*"

I have written elsewhere and in another connexion of visits to Herr von Bethmann Hollweg during the war and talks with him in this house in the Wilhelmstrasse. The tone and the content of these talks naturally changed as the situation developed—developed on lines not expected or intended by the politicians and the military. Not that Bethmann Hollweg had indulged in any heroics at the outset of war that needed damping down later. The few fanfares he

had sounded in the Reichstag or in public speeches elsewhere had never sounded very real, and there had been little left of them in his private conversation. By July 13th, 1917, things had gone so far that the High Command, Hindenburg and Ludendorff, were insisting on his dismissal, and while in France, the classic land of political generals, the military were being resolutely subordinated to the civil Government, in Germany the generals expelled the Chancellor by dint of banging the table with their swords. To preserve decent appearances the party leaders were consulted through the Crown Prince. Not only did the National Liberals, Prince Schönaich-Carolath and Stresemann, agree to the dismissal, but the busy Erzberger, the beaming, ruddy-faced harbinger of woe, supported them, and Bethmann was requested to send in his resignation. Out of the lottery drum which had become the instrument of government and the symbol of the State a fresh slip was drawn, with the name of Michaelis on it. A few hours after Bethmann's resignation I met his most trusted assistant in the Tiergartenstrasse, and this loyal *Geheimrat* exclaimed as he passed, with the enthusiasm engendered by a good cause even in defeat: "A lion brought down by the micel!" Herr von Bethmann Hollweg was no lion. If one must go to the animal world for a simile, he was a big, dignified watchdog, a St. Bernard or a Leonberger, who unhappily had not prevented the baby from falling into the water.

A few days later I called on Bethmann Hollweg. One always feels that one is fulfilling a chivalrous duty—and one pats oneself a little on the back—in showing marked respect to a fallen opponent at the moment when his former friends and clients are abandoning him. The moth-eaten odour of the place was less noticeable now, or mattered less; and



CHANCELLOR BETHMANN-HOLLWEG



nobody cared if a chair was rickety or a table threatened to fall to pieces. Was there anything now that stood firm? In these reception rooms, which were not part of the Chancellor's residence, there was no need to do any packing, everything could stay as it was. But even here one had the feeling of a breaking up, and one that meant so much more than the breaking up of a household. While the cases were being packed in the living rooms, was not another removal already beginning, was not the furniture of a whole epoch being cleared away?

When I came into his study on the 19th of July, 1917, at about ten in the morning, Bethmann had obviously been walking up and down for some time, smoking his *n*th cigarette. He did not seem to have just got up from his desk, the desk at which he had spent eight years revolving the destinies of Germany, at first with the self-confidence of an Olympian or a schoolmaster, and then with care and trouble crowding more and more closely round him, like the grey women in *Faust*. He came forward to meet me: "I am glad you have come once more; I am just off, leaving Berlin to-morrow. We will smoke a pipe of peace," he added, smiling, and holding out his cigarette case. I had not seen him, at all events at close quarters, in recent weeks, and I found him changed, thinner in the face, paler and more furrowed, and without his usual ruddiness. His tall figure, round-shouldered as it had now been for a considerable time, had acquired an inharmoniousness through its stoop, and seemed to dangle in unstable equilibrium in a field uniform ill-suited to such a carriage. He sat down at his desk, which was already clear of papers. It was the one at which he had had to sign his resignation, but there followed similar acts of self-guillotining at so many desks in that palace in the



Wilhelmstrasse that they could not all acquire the historic interest and value as museum pieces of the one at Fontainebleau at which Napoleon signed his abdication.

"Well," he asked, "what do you think of things to-day?" and continued without waiting for an answer, as one may ask: "How are you?" or "You here too?" The day's event was the first speech of Michaelis as Chancellor. He would have to deal with the peace resolution adopted by the majority of the Reichstag, and his speech was thus awaited with some curiosity.

"I hope," Bethmann continued, "that the peace motion will not be wholly without influence."

This, too, was no more than a phrase of the sort that is accompanied by a grip of the hand in the sick-room, and it was evident that he had a poor opinion of the motion. I had myself expected nothing from it, and had not shared the view of the Left parties that this peace move, organized by the inevitable Erzberger, was a useful piece of work. The astute subtleties of the old secret diplomacy, which had been made use of with a sort of chuckling affectation, on the principle, as it were, of "art for art's sake," in the Foreign Ministry during the weeks before the war, had brought disaster; but a public demonstration of the sort the Reichstag had now staged should at least have been preceded by diplomatic preparation: lacking the support of any such preliminaries, it was likely simply to collapse, and then to form an additional obstacle to the achievement of the aim in view. And there was no reason why anybody abroad should suppose that the Reichstag majority had become omnipotent and its declarations binding; there still existed the Government, as yet independent of Parliament, the High Command, the heavy industries with their insistence on annexations,

and the whole Nationalist movement, the clamour from which had just been sufficient to bring down the Chancellor. I replied, therefore, sceptically to Bethmann: the peace resolution seemed to me of very doubtful value; Michaelis would probably keep open some means of retreat into the annexationist camp; it would be said on the other side of the trenches that the resolution was merely platonic, and not meant seriously by any of the three parties, and that if the German armies were victorious it would be forgotten as quickly as the vows of Don Juan, or of a seasick miser in terror of shipwreck.

"Quite so," replied Bethmann, "but I am assuming that the Government will not entirely reject the resolution. I do not know, of course, I am keeping right out of the way now, and am not even inquiring. It is true that, if the Government is being urged to take up a definite standpoint in regard to the resolution, that will not be easy for any statesman. I have myself been reproached with speaking in insufficiently definite terms, speaking, for instance, of the safeguarding of Germany's future, which might mean anything. After all, is it conceivable that any statesman should be indifferent to the safeguarding of Germany's future?"

I agreed; but I put it that the effect of the most eloquent protestations might be destroyed, and enemy propaganda assisted, by an obstinate refusal to explain what sort of safeguards were wanted and what were not.

I was a little surprised to find that he seemed to think that the war was approaching its end. He thought there would probably be peace negotiations in the late autumn. The British would not wait to be pulled out of their awkward situation by America; that would be against their interest and would wound their national pride. Besides, the U-boat

war was really having effect. I objected that Great Britain would never simply leave the French in the lurch in the Alsace-Lorraine question, for if she did she would lose her influence over France; he agreed. I suggested that Lorraine could be given up in exchange for colonies, and he agreed that "it will have to come in the end to a rectification of frontiers."

"And then disarmament?"

"Absolutely," he replied, with the utmost decision. "It is absolutely inevitable. Where could we get the money?"—which showed, at all events, that he had his doubts of the slogan "The enemy will pay," which headed every invitation to subscribe to a new war loan, like the inscription on a triumphal arch.

He said once more, as he had done at many of our former meetings, that he regarded the parliamentary system as impracticable. It could not be reconciled with the federal constitution, and the parties had no outstanding men, or very few, with the character and capacity required for office. Here, at the very moment when he himself had been brought low, was one more assertion of the lordly self-confidence of the high official, the caste feeling which takes it for granted that everything will collapse and there will be nothing left in the country but incompetence if the mandarin no longer rules the state.

It would serve no purpose to reproduce the whole conversation, for most of the events discussed have long ago become mere specks on a distant horizon. Something brought us once more to a subject I had many times deliberately discussed with Bethmann, and should now have gladly avoided—pre-war policy. "From the end of 1913," he said, "from the time of Kokovtsov's visit to Berlin, I

feared and could not but fear that war had become inevitable."

"You have told me so before; I know well that you had these fears; but surely Kokovtsov, of all men, did not want war?"

"No, he did not, but he came on to us from Paris full of anxiety. He had secured the big loan in Paris only on the well-known conditions, and I could see that he was himself afraid that they were working for war."

Bethmann repeated once more that the war had been inevitable and would in any case have broken out at one moment or another; it was beyond the power of man, beyond the capacity of any statesman, to prevent it. Yet, if that was so, one may well ask what is the use of having statesmen. What is a diplomatic corps paid for, if it is so certain that the things of this world are not dependent in the slightest on human activities, but simply and purely on destiny?

Countless cigarettes had been smoked, and the ash-trays were filled with stubs to the brim. "The only thing that troubles me," said Bethmann, "is that now I can do nothing, can only look on." He made a little attempt to smile.

"Ay," I replied as I got up, "if we had the British system you would not be condemned to inactivity, you would have a seat in Parliament like Asquith."

He smiled again, uncertainly, evasively, neither assenting nor dissenting, and I went out through the desolate ante-rooms, in which the only living being was a grey-haired messenger, obviously debating within himself the question whether his pension was assured in any event, even amid earthquake and tornado.

It may be that at that very moment the new Chancellor, Herr Michaelis, was busy adding a few more subtle ambi-

guities to the speech with which he was to make his first appearance in the Reichstag as Chancellor, and putting the final polish on its emptiness. The appointment of this administrative official to the office of Imperial Chancellor had puzzled the large number of people who had never heard of him, and still more those who had met him. A speech he had made not long before on the food question had been praised in the newspapers, and in their embarrassment the Warwicks who now made the Chancellors in Germany probably said to one another: "Who was that man whose speech was so well received just now? We might send for him, he will be able to carry on as well as anybody else!" They knew too much about Bülow, Bernstorff, and other candidates, and as they knew nothing whatever about Herr Michaelis they preferred him.

At a time when Germany was threatened with disaster, this was a method of selection that seemed curious even to the most hard-boiled sceptics and to people who could stomach anything. It was less surprising to find that the chosen saviour of his country took office with complete self-possession, as though it were the most natural thing in the world, never dreaming of declining the post as one for which he was inadequately equipped. For it had been a very rare thing for any servant of this State to whom a higher post, a post of Minister or the like, had been offered, to consider himself unequal to it; and even if he did, and rightly, he would still accept the promotion, simply as a matter of loyalty, and because it had become a habit with him to obey the King and make sacrifices for the Fatherland. When Herr Michaelis came out of the provincial seclusion in which he had worked, and made his appearance, with the title of Imperial Chancellor, which still had some prestige left, in

front of his critical audience, everybody began to ask who had discovered him. But no discoverer came forward. Seven cities of Greece claimed to be the birthplace of Homer. Seventy persons in official positions declared that they had had nothing to do with the birth of this Chancellorship.

The new Imperial Chancellor sent me a message that he wanted to talk to me, and so I went on the afternoon of July 27, 1917, to see the new master in the old house. In the courtyard of the Chancellor's palace there were still two furniture vans, and in the entrance hall a huge case was being broken open with big chisels as I went in. It was evident that the whole palace was having a very thorough reconstruction. The way the new arrivals were settling in, evidently in preparation for a long stay, was calculated, perhaps, to give confidence, and was certainly evidence that they themselves lacked none. Herr Michaelis had not taken up his quarters in the study his predecessor Bethmann and other Chancellors of the Empire had used, but was provisionally carrying on the business of government in a rather remote room which was by no means imposing. Was this for the time only, or out of tact or respect or modesty, or was the intention to stress the point that a really new age had now begun? In the ante-room there was a medley of furniture just unpacked or brought along out of other rooms—I seemed to recognize a good deal of it. Refurnishing was going on, and it looked rather as if the method was to make a stew out of the remains of the last meal. I looked out of the window. In the garden below a tea-table had been laid, and the Chancellor's wife was sitting at it with a few guests, ladies and gentlemen. It all seemed rather stiff; the guests seemed to be overcome with respect; they sat up as straight as ramrods, and in spite of the hostess's

encouraging cordiality they remained helplessly rigid.

Herr Michaelis shook hands with me and greeted me as though we had at least been schoolfellows together. He said we had already met, but that was either a mistake or one of those deliberate misunderstandings with which bright young drawing-room lions start a conversation. The pictures of him gave him a surly appearance; I did not find him surly at all, but of the official type. He looked particularly like some official of an institution, the perfect administrator of a charitable foundation, an orphanage, especially a pious foundation, an orphanage in which there is diligent thanksgiving to the dear Lord. He was scarcely of middle height, but there was no harm at all in this contrast with his predecessor. The public needs variety, not always the same scene, the same characters, the same deportment, the same faces. It would puzzle me a good deal now to try to describe the features of Chancellor Michaelis in any detail. All that I still recollect is the dark hair and the agreeable expression, the air of the genial hostel warden; all else has been effaced through the passage of time. It must not be inferred, of course, that it was an uninteresting head with nothing characteristic to impress itself on my memory. One may remember every hair of the moustache of some man in whom one is completely uninterested, while some strange trick of the memory may defeat every effort to recall a loved face that has been tenderly observed a thousand times.

"Believe me," he said, "I should never have presumed to take over this office if I had not been so convinced that after all it is the facts that are the determining element. Only the facts can determine the course of events."

"Still," I ventured to object, "one can guide them."

He nodded. "Certainly. One has to watch them and then

catch hold of them, but still, practically everything depends on them."

Was he saying this simply out of modesty? Undoubtedly he was not; this was the theory that made ambition permissible, almost innocent and harmless, since after all everything depended on events. We have had heads of the state who seemed to us to have wriggled into their exalted office through the keyholes, but who assured us that they would not voluntarily have taken possession of it but had received a divine command and held it as a mission from Heaven. It has been our lot to be witnesses of the flow of the consecrated oil of divine right, once a privilege limited to emperors and kings, over the brows and into the speeches of Knights of the Grail of this sort. Dr. Michaelis eschewed extravagances like that. But he was a dentist who bends over the patient and tells him that toothache is bound to run its course, and that its duration is not determined by the surgeon but by the ailing nerve.

We spoke of the situation and of the demand for constitutional reform, and the new Chancellor of the Empire expressed his view:

"It is one of our enemies' mistakes that they imagine they can defeat the King of Prussia by insisting on the democratization of Germany."

Herr Michaelis seemed to be under the strange delusion that it was only abroad that there was any desire for reforms in Germany, and I felt bound to disabuse him of it. But he held obstinately to it, slightly shifting his ground:

"It is one of our enemies' mistakes—but I admit that one should agree with one's adversary even when he is wrong, if that is necessary in one's own interest. I can imagine myself taking up the position of affecting not to notice the



mistake, and agreeing to it—for the gallery——”

“For the gallery?” I asked, a little taken aback by the confessions of this Machiavelli in canonicals.

“Not for the gallery in our own country, I shall never do that, of course not; nor should I ever do anything I considered conceivably harmful to our country, even in order to get peace.”

I asked him whether he thought a redistribution of power and of responsibility would necessarily be harmful to the country. It was necessary to consider what would come after this war. The war would leave behind it an enormous mass of discontent; it would be possible then to speak openly about everything that had preceded the war, including the pre-war policy; there would be a search for those who were responsible; the storm would break over the Kaiser. The monarchy needed protection, and there could be none without real parliamentarism, without the sharing of responsibility by a popular assembly, and quite certainly none under an absolutist or semi-absolutist personal régime.

For two or three seconds he chewed that over. Then he said:

“Suppose Edward VII had declared a war, and Great Britain had lost it—the King would have had to share the responsibility, would he not? Just the same, in spite of the parliamentary system?”

“No,” I had to reply, “for he could not possibly have declared war. In England war can only be declared by the parliamentary Government and with the permission of Parliament, and thus the King is protected. The development of this system, and the preference for it over any other régime by modern nations, is a product of deep political insight.”

He replied, gently shaking his head, in the manner of a

candidate undergoing examination who is not sure, and does not want to show it, and so puts all the confidence he can muster into his repetition of the wrong date:

"It is impossible to maintain that, you could not say it of France."

"Yes, of France too, for our Empire has gone to ruin more rapidly than their parliamentary Republic, which has provided a safety valve for all discontent."

It was evident that the situation was getting too hot for him. There was a pause while he hunted round for the emergency exit. Then he said:

"You will appreciate, I am still only trying to get a general view of things, I still have to work out an accurate view of the whole situation and get clear about it all. I quite agree that it is possible to make more use of the popular assembly, for instance in the drafting of legislation. I do not for a moment suggest that nobody but an official can do competent work—I am well acquainted with the quality of our officials, they are a valuable element, but they naturally have their shortcomings like everyone else. I do really expect useful results from collaboration with Parliament, indeed I am looking forward to it, I am counting on it for an element of revival, of revitalization. . . ."

He did not venture to count on an early peace. It was true, of course, that there was already a great deal of war-weariness, especially in France and Italy.

"Yes," I objected, "if only war with America had not been allowed to come, but now they are bringing their army across the ocean."

There were too many contentious subjects; there was no getting the conversation through all these thorny hedges. We took a polite farewell of one another, and Herr Michaelis

said we must keep in touch—there was no reason why differences of political view should affect personal relations, and he hoped he would often see me.

This hope—I was sure he meant what he said—was destined to remain unfulfilled. Michaelis had not even time to get a general view of things, and the thorough alterations in the Chancellor's residence, the busy rearrangements and all the trouble of moving in and unpacking might have been saved. No more than a month after our enlightening discussion there came an incident that produced some excitement in the *Hauptausschuss*, the main committee, of the Reichstag. Chancellor Michaelis tried to draw back from the peace resolution to which he had definitely agreed in his discussions with the party leaders, and he did it clumsily. Then he tried to withdraw that withdrawal, and tripped so miserably over his own toes that a storm broke out and for a moment the Left parties and the Centre were determined to demand his resignation there and then. Only the Democrat Payer held them back. While the victim whom anonymous patrons had pushed into this sphere looked on, pale and daunted, at the uproar around him, Herr Helfferich, the Secretary for the Treasury, sat next to him motionless and with an air of infinite, steely indifference.

From that moment this Chancellorship was on its death-bed. On October 6, 1917, in a debate in the Reichstag on the Pan-German agitation and the support given to it in the army, there came sharp conflicts between Herr von Stein, the Minister of War, and the Left parties, and all parties were furious at the Chancellor's failure to declare himself either for one side or for the other: his only reaction to it all seemed to be to envy the snail its shell. His silence was taken as a last evidence of his inadequacy, and when

he did speak on the following day it was only taken as a last evidence of all. The crisis had become inevitable, the search for a new man began again, and Herr von Payer and Konrad Haussmann, the Democrats, were loud in their enthusiasm in the lobbies, at meetings of the party executives, in the newspaper offices, and wherever propaganda seemed useful, for Prince Max of Baden. Then, as though it was desired to go carefully with the new stock and to use up the remains of the old stock first, Baron von Hertling, the aged Centre leader, was consecrated as Imperial Chancellor.

Nobody offered any defence of Herr Michaelis, only unkind things were said of him, and naturally it was beside the question to praise the Imperial Chancellor for his domestic and family virtues, or his conscientiousness as an orphanage administrator and sense of duty as an official. His appointment undoubtedly did a good deal to discredit the Imperial rule under which, in such a situation, it had been possible. Like Napoleon after the flight from Elba, Herr Michaelis had his hundred days; he even had a few more thrown in. But it was no hundred-day epic, and if it was a tragedy it lacked not only the dramatic element but every element of the edifying. The darts that were now directed against the little figure of Herr Michaelis ought to have been aimed at those who had brought down Herr von Bethmann and offered the nation this *ersatz*-man in his place. But as the party leaders had themselves been involved in the intrigue, judgment was executed only on the person of the discovery, not on his frivolous discoverers.

Herr Michaelis disappeared quietly and with dignity into the obscurity from which he had so suddenly emerged. It is due to him to record that he allowed himself to be pierced

by the darts with the gentle and meek long-suffering of a St. Sebastian.

His appointment had produced no opposition at all and could not have produced any, for Herr Michaelis had come with the suddenness of a meteor's fall from the heavens. Baron von Hertling's appointment was opposed virtually by all parties, and also by sound common sense. The leading parliamentarians of the majority parties, the Left, Centre, and National Liberals, discussed many candidatures; in addition to that of Prince Max the names of Kühlmann, then Foreign Secretary, Solf, Count Bernstorff, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, and Prince Hatzfeld were brought forward. The parties of the Left, especially the Social Democrats, wanted to have Herr von Payer as Vice-Chancellor, and Herr Wermuth, *Oberbürgermeister* of Berlin, was also mentioned. Even Erzberger was against Hertling, though he belonged to his own party, and it cannot be said that the ambition of the Centre party for power forced this solution of the crisis. It was generally assumed up to the last that Hertling would be induced by the coolness of his reception, and also by the infirmities of his advanced years, to decline the Chancellorship, but once more insufficient account was taken of the loyalty that never failed to show itself when there was a high office to be filled and the king called.

What motive, apart from this sense of loyalty, could have led Baron von Hertling, in the concluding years of a life rich in rewards, to add to all his past titles that of the Imperial Chancellor, and to permit his easy chair to be carried up to the bridge in the midst of the raging storm? He could not be moved by the ambition to carry out an idea, a plan of salvation, for he had no idea and no plan. But why, after the experience with Herr Michaelis, did the choice fall on him?

At the head of France there stood Clemenceau, a man well on into the seventies, and probably it was considered that what an old Bordeaux can do an old Rhine wine can do too. We know what Cicero has written in praise of old age. We know and have often witnessed how gifted men have in their old age a new period of activity, an Indian summer of creativeness, and we know plenty of poets and statesmen who have come only late in their lives to the height of their powers and their productivity. Baron von Hertling had attained in his long life all that can be attained by useful talents united to the social rank of a baron—he was no dazzling personality, no enthralling speaker, no original thinker, but the Pope, the King of Bavaria, the German Emperor, the Party, the learned bodies had conferred upon him their most coveted distinctions, and he was festooned with decorations like a Christmas tree. Now the final crown, the dignity of Chancellor, could be added to them all; but no longer could the tree produce new sap and green leaves.

The aureole of the patriarch, which leads so many people in Germany to write in an announcement of death: "Our father, grandfather, and great-grandfather has died at the venerable age of 85"—as though there were ground for veneration in the simple attaining of advanced years—was, however, not by any means as great as that of the Centre and the Catholic Church, which stood behind its militants guiding and supervising everything. There was an unshakable conviction that political ability had concentrated in that reservoir, and the words "Catholic Church" conveyed the suggestion of a grandiose wisdom, unruffled and eternal, the solidity of the Rock of Peter. Since the end of the period of the Popes who, like Sixtus IV and Alexander VI, the father of Cesare Borgia, had been so tremendous a scandal, there

had been enthroned in the Papal See, or so at least it seemed, virtually none but princes of the church of wide vision, political rulers in the highest sense of the term. And the historian Rafael Sabatini has whitewashed even Alexander VI, the Borgia, and his son. The Centre also retained something still of the prestige of Windthorst, the darling of all caricaturists, who had carried on the feud against Bismarck with so much wit and foxy suppleness, and the Party was regarded as a fox's lair, a Malepartus in which each new arrival resembled his famous ancestor. But even in the Reynard family abilities fell away with the generations.

In the eleven months of the Hertling Government I only once had the opportunity of speaking to the Chancellor, and what was said in the few minutes was of so little substance that the terms "conversation" and "talk" would be quite inappropriate. Kühlmann, and his assistant Herr von Hoesch under his instructions, had pressed me to support Hertling's candidature, but I had strongly criticized it, and later I had had no reason for once more visiting the Chancellor's palace. However, on November 6, 1917, Herr von Hertling gave a big reception. The invitation card bore the solemn and ceremonious note, which had fallen almost entirely out of use during the war:

"9—10.30. After Dinner. Evening Dress."

The times given indicated that the host liked to go to bed before eleven. As I arrived I saw him in the centre of a group in conversation. The star of some order glistened on his breast, and the dapper little man in his evening dress had the spruce and elegant grace of old age with the fine manners of some Minister of the Court, used to the company of princesses, or a papal chamberlain. I discussed with Rizoff, the Bulgarian Minister, and Hakki Pasha, the Turkish Ambassador,

the highly political question of who is the happiest of human beings. Rizoff, who had a longing for membership of the guild of authors, declared that a journalist is happier than a king; Hakki Pasha gave the prize to the multi-millionaire. Rizoff objected that when the millionaire got up in the morning he would have no idea what to do with himself all day. We had got so far when Herr von Radowitz, Under Secretary of State in the Chancellery, came up and asked me to go over to Hertling. Baron von Hertling, just like Dr. Michaelis, recalled the fact, which had failed to impress itself on my memory, that we were old acquaintances. He went on to say, in a tone almost eagerly disarming, that now we should surely have a period of internal peace; no doubt I knew that he had taken a stand for equal suffrage.

"I hope the result will justify your efforts," I replied.

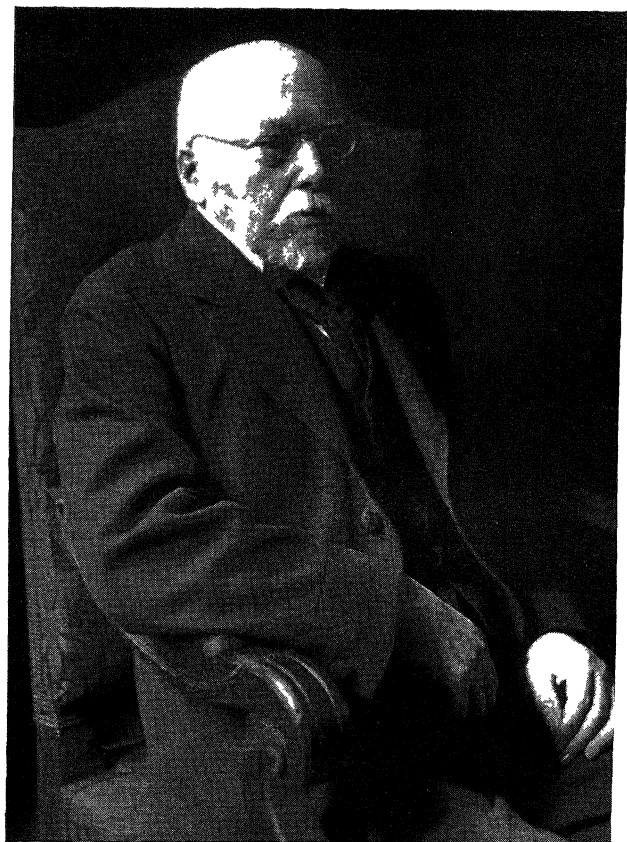
"Yes, what will come of it——!"

What came of it all, and not only of the franchise reform, which was now a secondary matter, in the course of the eleven months during which Baron von Hertling was Imperial Chancellor, is to be found in deeply graven letters on the tragic memorial of that period. Like Marie Antoinette's courtiers, the Besenvals and Vaudreuils, Baron von Hertling sat on the bank and watched the incessantly rising torrent, which was already carrying down great blocks torn from its bed and destroying bridges along its course. He did not sit there with the witty nonchalance, the triflers' curiosity, the irony and self-mockery of that dying *ancien régime*, but with entire correctness of demeanour and not the slightest frivolity. But he saw no means of effectively stemming the current with his aristocratic, delicate hands, and he was careful not to allow himself to get uselessly excited; it was important to husband his strength at this difficult time, and,



as already mentioned, he made a point of going to bed before eleven. His presence counted for just as much in the service of the German nation as if he had been living in the moon, or had been a plaster cast of the statue of a Pharaoh in the innermost room of some museum. This was all the more unfortunate since it was no longer possible to conceal the truth by issuing bulletins reporting victories. No censorship was able to prevent knowledge of the collapse of the western offensive despite further dreadful mass sacrifices; of the evacuation now begun of territory conquered four years earlier; of the disintegration of the Austrian and Bulgarian armies; or of the Notes from President Wilson, which were more and more plainly demanding the Kaiser's abdication. The exhausted and impoverished nation was suddenly robbed of the illusions which had too long been imposed on it, and faced now with the cruel reality.

There were some who asked at the time, and later, whether Germany's catastrophe would have broken over her in this way in all its frightfulness if the army commanders had allowed themselves to be persuaded only to give notice of the western offensive, without actually carrying out their plan. All prudent advisers were of the opinion that the threat should be used in order to induce the enemy to negotiate, but that last card should never on any account have been actually played, since if it failed it was bound to be followed by immediate collapse. Now the catastrophe was approaching like an ominous black wall of cloud; the horrified nation looked round for a pilot in whom it could place trust, and found only a courteous, weary, aloof old man. Kühlmann, the only one who could still work upon public opinion if the worst came, had been removed by Hindenburg and Ludendorff, and his place was now taken by Admiral von Hintze, a



CHANCELLOR COUNT HERTLING



retired officer who had a reputation for diplomatic craftiness; unhappily, at his first appearance in the *Hauptausschuss* he made no impression with this talent, and, indeed, no impression of any sort.

A new phrase acquired steadily growing currency: a "popular government" must be set up. A new faith grew with this new phrase. Baron von Hertling was informed by his party colleague Fehrenbach, on the general behalf, of the state of feeling, and on this Hertling resigned. On September 30, 1918, an Imperial decree proclaimed the participation of the nation in the Government. All too late. Too late for the Kaiser and too late for the nation, for the emergency invocation of democracy could not undo the military defeats; the new régime had to take over the most thankless tasks, while its worst enemies looked on, amused, and glad to leave the field to it; all the laurel bushes had long ago been plucked bare. When the caravan is athirst, the strong, patient, enduring animal that bears the sheik and his possessions is left to find the way to the oasis and its wells, and then it becomes "the proud ship of the desert." Afterwards, at all events for many unbelievers, it is merely the creature that must serve and be led, and is given its plain zoological name without any poetical flourishes.

Three weeks earlier I had gone down the Danube from Passau to Vienna and Budapest, and I returned to Berlin only a few days before the new crisis. In Vienna I had seen a hunger that killed even the wit at the café tables, and the Ring was lined with beggars who might have come out of paintings by Breughels; yet there was splendid white bread on board the boat between Vienna and Budapest (and in consequence crowds of Austrian passengers); and at the Hungarian frontier we entered Paradise. Well filled cake-

trays on every table, excellent coffee with milk and sugar, mountains of butter, menus with twenty meat dishes to choose from, gypsy bands, cheerful Sunday promenading, the Danube embankments filled with handsome and elegant women. And the general optimism, filling the wonderful city and adding new sparkle to the sunshine, was plainly shared in full by the most responsible people, Ministers and politicians, bank directors and industrialists. I visited Wekerle, the Prime Minister, who looked like a successful French lawyer, the adviser of rich families and an "ornament of the Bar"; Andrásy, Stérényi (Minister of Commerce) and Vásonyi, the Left leader: all of them criticized Berlin and Vienna, either openly and without measure, or considerately and with moderation, but all with confidence that Hungary would come out of the bankruptcy much better than the rest, without serious damage. Spoken or unspoken, expressed or implied, there was always the one conviction, that Germany would expel the Kaiser, would lose Alsace-Lorraine, and would pay an indemnity; that Austria would be neatly carved up like a Rouen duck; but that all the world loved Hungary and she would not come off too badly. When I got to Vienna on my way back the unhappy Foreign Minister, Count Burian, asked me to call on him and told me in tones of genuine grief that Austria could fight no longer and was finished. I was to say so in Berlin; but it was no news there.

This time the Court yielded to the insistent pressure for the summoning of Prince Max of Baden to office as Chancellor. The appointment was capable of a symbolic interpretation by the public, and indeed of several. Baden was the liberal State, its temperament was in gratifying contrast to Prussian rigour, which for all its sternness had not saved Germany, and

to the "spirit of Potsdam," which was manifestly behind the times in various respects. Such men as Michaelis and Hertling, and the whole personnel of the past governments and powers behind the scene, had come from regions virtually cut off from contact with the mass of the people. The heir to the throne of Baden came from yet more exalted regions, but they did not seem so remote from the people as the intermediate stages; so, sometimes, in mountain country, people a couple of thousand feet up may seem farther from the valley than does the peak itself.

In this hour of peril Prince Max's acceptance of the Chancellor's office was evidence of a sense of solidarity that did people good. It was an unusual, indeed an unprecedented step, and only something unprecedented could stir men's imagination and lift up their spirit once more. The heir apparent in Baden put himself at the head of a movement which swept away "divine right" and absolutism, and won for the nation the right to a voice in the determination of its own destiny. He was not a Philippe Egalité, though in the Kaiser's eyes he was that very renegade: he had committed treason against the Hohenzollern dynasty, against all dynastic ideas, against the consecrated tradition. The prince was to be "first servant of his nation"—but only in such measure as he pleased, and answerable to none but the eternal Judge whom men hope to conciliate by diligently building churches. The "first servant" whom God has installed is made of vastly different material from the first servant appointed by men, and whom men can dismiss, even if his name be Bismarck. The astronomers tell us that the sun is some ninety million miles from the earth: that is nothing to the distance between the throne and the highest step beneath it. Cardinal Ascanio Sforza arranged a tourney

in Rome in honour of the Turkish Prince Djem, some little time before the prince was quietly assassinated. He asked the prince what he thought of the tourney, and the Oriental gave a reply which William II would certainly have been glad to write at the foot of the proposal to make Prince Max Imperial Chancellor. In his country, said the scion of the Sultan, such battles were staged only between slaves. If the slaves fell it did not matter.

Konrad Haussmann, the South German Democrat leader, was the most faithful of followers of Prince Max. In his intellectual outlook and in temperament he belonged to a generation of genuinely democratic men of the people which already had virtually died out, and of which only a few offshoots remained in existence, the generation of 1848. A vehement, contentious, passionate, high-souled man, a survivor of the race of the Three Musketeers or the line of Cyrano de Bergerac, a cadet of Gascony, but without the extravagant bravado. He was entirely German in feeling, but there was a touch of the Frenchman in him. He used to like to argue with me, especially in the days when he would defend Kiderlen-Wächter with the affection of a fellow-Swabian, and as he talked his loose black artist's tie ought really to have been fluttering in the wind like the scarf of a knight in Ariosto's poem. Thus I was inclined to be sceptical when he sang the praises of Prince Max to me with true missionary zeal, his lively features, in which the long black moustache reinforced both the artistic and the militant note, taking on something of the ardour of a young man in love. He insisted that I must meet the prince, and I should see for myself that he was not being praised too highly.

It was agreed that we should go to see him on October 22, 1918, and Konrad Haussmann went with me, much as a

professor of the history of art may proudly show us a newly acquired treasure in his museum or a picture in the Cathedral under his care, or an engineer may conduct us with an expert's smile to the latest technical achievement. Prince Max had only been Chancellor for three weeks, but already a shadow had crossed his path, only a day or two before our visit. A letter he had written earlier in the war to Prince Alexander Hohenlohe, a man of high intelligence, but out of health and living at the time in Switzerland, had been discovered and published. The publication had been a source of vexation and worry to his followers, and had been pounced on and exploited with malicious pleasure by the reactionaries. Alexander Hohenlohe, a son of the third Chancellor, was a pacifist, intellectually akin to Romain Rolland, and also an advocate of thoroughgoing reform in Germany. He died at a relatively early age; he was a man of the type that remained in obscurity behind those who are skilled in the arts of push and publicity. Prince Max of Baden, in his letter to Prince Alexander, had opposed pacifism and parliamentarism, and had written various things that now, brought to light in the changed situation, were very awkward. He had only just entered the Chancellor's palace, and this revelation almost brought him straight out again. But he was able to say that since then he had changed his opinion, and who has not done so in his time, changing an old garment for a new one? Many change their very skin.

He was the fourth Chancellor since the war began. Nobody remembered Bethmann any longer; all that remained from that long-forgotten epoch was the attendant who hung up hats and coats on the pegs down below: probably he had been exempted from combatant service on account of heart



trouble or varicose veins. As Konrad Haussmann and I entered, Prince Max, in the so-called interim dress, without sword and cap, was crossing the vestibule from one room to another. He was carrying a file of papers, just as though he were an orderly officer on duty here. It would not have been possible to meet either Bethmann or Hertling or Michaelis like that. Officialdom has its domestic rules, unwritten laws prescribing what is fitting for each person, according to his rank. It was evident that Prince Max was taking his job seriously and revelling in it. He was manifestly enjoying his escape from court ceremonial, his changed environment, the immensely wider field of action, the more important round of duties, and even the incomparably greater difficulties and cares and labours.

He shook hands, asked us to wait just a minute, and then, when he came back out of the room, asked whether we would like to go into the garden with him. He felt the need of it; he had not yet been into the fresh air all the morning. Of course we agreed. He put on his military cloak, and then we went through the park, most of the time around a big lawn, occasionally as far as the spot where Princess Bülow used to say with such pretty enthusiasm: "Have you seen my pergola?" The tops of the old trees had their autumn warmth of colour, and lyrical spirits, who spin their songs out of nature and the day's events, might have found it very significant, and in tune with the times, that withered leaves were circling down in the sharp atmosphere, and that, as was undeniably the case, in these last days of October many things were beginning to be stripped bare.

After the usual overture of little courtesies the talk turned to the Note that had just been sent off in reply to President Wilson. I had been unable to praise it, for like most of these

German Notes it had lacked pride and frankness alike; from whatever standpoint it was regarded, it was a product of indecision and of official timidity. The Chancellor agreed; he, too, felt that the Note was not good. "But there were too many people mixed up in it, and so, of course, various things went wrong. I had drafted a Note, but it was considered too weak, and although I did not entirely agree I withdrew it. Then the Note was drafted jointly—with the inevitable results. If you have any ideas in cases of this sort that you think might be serviceable, please send me your proposal; I should be very grateful to you for it."

I objected that he had plenty of excellent stylists in his offices; and anyhow a Note of this sort ought always to be the work of a single person; if a dozen people had a hand in it the result would certainly gain nothing in unity and effectiveness. He was going to speak in the Reichstag that afternoon, and seemed to be pleased with the draft of his speech, for he said that he considered the speech better than the Note; it was also better put together. It proved to be really a fine speech, filled with sincere idealism, courteous and manly in tone, without stridency or browbeating, temperate without weakness and in the best traditional style. The prince's speeches were entirely in tune with his personality, which would never have been at home amid the princely state of the old Weimar of Goethe's day, but which one could imagine finding pleasure in talks about Goethe and his circle at the grand-ducal tea-tables of a later period, and in classical culture in general. He had, of course, been no more the sole author of his speeches than of his Notes; an unnamed co-author had stood at his side; but the matter for the policy speeches of all his predecessors had almost always been supplied by the *Geheimräte* much in the same way as at

an economical wedding one uncle provides the silver knives and forks and another the spoons; and Prince Max's collaborators had at least so adjusted themselves to the mentality of the head of the firm that no addition seemed incongruous and everything was in harmony with the general conception one formed of the speaker.

The prince began rather suddenly to speak of his letter to Alexander Hohenlohe; the abrupt transition to this subject showed how it weighed on his mind. "It was," he said, "an unfortunate letter." He was very fond of Prince Alexander Hohenlohe, and had come to like him still more, in consequence of his straightforwardness, during the war, but Hohenlohe had irritated him by the length to which he carried his ideas. The result had been that he had gone farther in his letter than he had intended. "There is a good deal in my letter that I still hold to, but there are other things that simply horrified me when I read it again now. But when I spoke of exploiting the war I was not thinking of annexations but of economic exploitation." He withdrew what he had written against parliamentarism: he saw things differently now.

The conversation jumped to the charges against Germany of looting and of carrying off machinery, and the charges in regard to the military rule in the occupied territories, charges which were being repeated now with such vehemence by the enemy that it was plain that they were to be made use of when negotiations began. I asked whether it could not at least be discovered where the machinery had been taken and who had possession of it, but the prince knew nothing about this. The behaviour of the troops in the field, he said, had always made a very good impression on him, and this had been confirmed by reports of neutral observers which had reached him.

He walked at a good pace between the two of us, with fairly rapid steps, and it was a sort of route march for health. Probably this was his regular pace through the parks of the palaces in Baden, or he may have found the autumn air a little too sharp; it may also have been that he was still under the influence of the momentum of his new work. Free and unconstrained, open and hearty as were his talk and his manner, one felt that all this changed automatically when considerations of his position seemed to require it or court influences asserted themselves: then he regulated his gestures, tempered his language, and meticulously controlled his attitude. Here in Berlin the politicians with whom he now came into contact met him more or less on equal terms, or at least with equal power, and when he found them, or imagined them, to be helpers and friends, sharing his views, he enjoyed the feeling of being just one of a group; at such times there was no more than a vestige still visible to recall his title of "His Highness." This vestige, however, visible in externals, the result of his upbringing, revealed "the prince" to every eye. Slim and well-formed, he had the family traits which make the descendants of many princely families as indistinguishably like one another as the Spanish noblemen in the paintings by El Greco; to these common traits there was added the rarer one of a trained and active intelligence, though certainly one that was not greatly above the average. Others knew him much better than I, and may have had glimpses of hidden depths. So far as I was concerned, I did not get the impression that he might possess them.

Konrad Haussmann, who was walking on the other side of the prince, seemed to me to have grown "nervy" and impatient. He could not get the conversation to the point to which he wanted to bring it. Sometimes he gave me a

meaning look, and I quite understood him: the one subject he considered worth discussing was that of the abdication of the Kaiser. At last he burst out with the question whether we had read the articles in the Bavarian press in which the abdication was being demanded with unexampled vigour—and this was not going on only in Bavaria. Looking past the prince at me, he asked me whether it was not true that with very few exceptions the whole nation considered the abdication indispensable. "The Conservatives are entirely at one with us in thinking so."

The prince looked at me and asked, very calmly, as though not altogether surprised at the turn in the conversation:

"Is that really so?"

I replied that it was difficult to conceive how William II could possibly remain emperor after the defeat. He would be held responsible for every strip of territory that had to be ceded. There would be a feeling that he ought to pay every million demanded from Germany; and it would be constantly said that if he had gone Germany would have secured a different peace.

"And who is to become Kaiser?" asked Prince Max. "The Crown Prince is hardly less unpopular, and the Entente would certainly not be ready to agree to any better conditions for him."

"Then," I said, "a grandson, or, if there is no help for it, one of the federal princes."

"A grandson? That involves a regency, but who shall be Regent?"

I made a motion of my hand to indicate Prince Max himself. He shook his head and said:

"I am related to the Kaiser, and all this is more difficult for me than for anybody else; you will understand that."

"It will be well," I replied, "at all events, to have definitely in view what should be done, for otherwise you will lose hold of the reins and events will break once more over an unprepared nation, and in such a way that it will be impossible to regain control of them."

He walked on in silence, but his silence itself revealed that he knew and saw all this, and that he was only fettered by the bonds of relationship and the solidarity of dynasties.

Eighteen days later, after vain telephoning with the High Command, whither William II had betaken himself, Prince Max was compelled to announce that the Kaiser had abdicated. He had to put aside family feelings and considerations; he had no time to debate the last niceties of tact; down below in the streets the revolution was on the march, the soldiers were throwing away their arms, and still no decision could be obtained from the High Command. The faithful adherents of the Imperial régime, whose faithfulness was not very active at that critical moment, and has a way of rising and falling barometrically with the political weather, declare that by announcing an abdication which had not yet been decided Prince Max was guilty of an offence against his supreme lord. But the prince, whose picture has so many twin brothers in the long portrait gallery of the European princely courts, did not resemble in the least those members of former reigning houses, familiar to us in Shakespeare's historical plays, who were intent on destroying a crowned brother or cousin. The aim had been to save the monarchical principle through the Kaiser's renunciation, and if the chief actor had not made such obstinate resistance there might still have been a chance of this a few days earlier, but now it had become impossible: monarch and monarchy sank together.

Prince Max said good-bye to us and went back into the house, a little more slowly, probably tired. The damp autumn air had become chilly, and he had not the leather hide of a sportsman, was not insensitive to weather and wind. He was the last to hold his office: when we came back here three weeks later there was no longer an Imperial Chancellor. Only the attendant who hung our coats on the hooks in the vestibule was still in office.

Prince Max had been welcomed by the middle-class democrats and by all friends of reform almost with the hopes with which a much greater man, Turgot, was welcomed in his day by Voltaire and the Encyclopædists. But the prince could effect no salvation; the only task destiny allotted him was that of closing the eyes of the dying régime. He was no magician; he would certainly have been unable to overcome the differences between past and present, between his own origin and the popular forces that were now in motion; and the likes and dislikes which he had expressed in his "unfortunate letter," and which he subsequently disowned, might have shown themselves again. But he was ahead of most of those whose names are entered in the *Almanach de Gotha*. And he had the distinction of a man whom on-lookers point out to one another with respect as he walks, first of the procession, behind the coffin.

## V

### THE DUPE'S REVOLUTION

THE rhetorical style is generally unsound even in oratory. Honesty has no need for turgid language, and in very many cases—that of Jaurès was an absolute exception—rhetoric in speech serves only the most unmitigated deception of the people. When history is written in the rhetorical style it is almost always atrocious. Here, too, there are rare exceptions. Michelet is one: the strong wings of his language carried the idea of enlightenment, of the liberation of thought, through a long night to a far dawn. Merejkovsky, on the other hand, becomes unendurable when he reinterprets Napoleon to us in the exalted tones of a raving sibyl and acclaims the popular legend as the only true verdict. It is pretty bad when Carlyle sets out to trumpet the message of hero-worship, like an old teacher in his slippers addressing a class of children. From lyrical intensity of this sort, at all events, the historian finds himself instinctively saved in writing of the German Revolution of November 1918.

All other revolutions had their specific costume. The great French Revolution had its own, proclaiming the victory of the Third Estate over the Court party and the aristocrats; it was cut to the pattern of the youthful enthusiasm of Camille Desmoulins, of the powerful will of Danton, of the affected puritanism of Robespierre's dictatorship. The German Revolution of 1848 had a gorgeous



gallery of characteristic costumes, a wealth of exquisite fancy in the external presentation of personality. Friedrich Hecker and Gustav Struve, the Baden leader, with their blouses and braided jackets, their broad-brimmed hats with feathers stuck saucily in them, and cavalry-sabres buckled at their side, were unmistakable captains of rather romantic fighters for freedom. The old pictures showing some deployment of these groups of liberators reveal their charmingly naïve enthusiasm and at the same time their effort to clothe themselves in character, to make an impression, to be men who had cast aside the livery of servitude as well as its spirit. Recollections of the picturesqueness of the armies of the Convention played their part in this, but the German romanticism which had already made its appearance added its own traits. In November 1918 the only dress was the worn and shabby coat of the little man; nobody was in search of the picturesque, and where, indeed, could it have been found amid the grey destitution of that day? That Revolution could not have a costume, and nobody seemed to feel the need of one. After the four years of war there was no creative energy left, not enough even for a rebel's necktie, and while the other revolutions had their particular postures, their physical and intellectual attitudes, that of 1789 the Roman tradition and that of 1848 the gesture of the fighter at the barricades and the rebel volunteer, the revolution of 1918 had no such element. Too much of tragic reality had been lived through for any interest to be left in following the tragic models. Fifteen years later other men, with more time and inclination for such inventions, fitted themselves and their followers into interesting uniforms. That November of 1918 was no season for new fashions.

Nor did there beat, except rarely, any fervently revolu-

tionary hearts in the tired frames beneath that November drabness. No literature had prepared men's minds for the Republic, no Freiligrath, no Herwegh had shaken the thrones of princes by the might of the poet's pen, and the prose of the most radical critics had been least concerned of all with constitutional forms. Apart from Rosa Luxemburg there was no strong revolutionary figure. The feeble and fidgety Liebknecht, whom nothing but self-sacrificing loyalty prevented that remarkable woman from abandoning, was a poor substitute for a tribune. The Social Democratic leaders were like a stage-player who has always filled the decorous part of the old father in Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe* and suddenly has to play the fiery young Ferdinand. They were compelled to do the work of the Revolution because it was a proletarian movement, and because they could not permit immature rebels and Bolshevistic Spartacists to snatch the working classes from them, and to produce a chaos at the thought of which their elderly souls, used to the orderliness and reasonableness and discipline of trade union officialdom, were filled with horror.

Some of these Social Democratic leaders became admirable Ministers. The imperial system had never allowed them the slightest opportunity to study the part, and yet they developed into statesmanly personalities, perhaps too statesmanly, and showed more talent for government than many of their predecessors under the old régime. Ebert, Otto Braun, and Severing had not been to universities, had not sat at examinations, had not advanced from post to post in the public service; but they would have made an excellent showing in any modern state, any democratic republic or liberal parliamentary monarchy. They came into office in the midst of the endless confusion of defeat, they had to bring the

nation out of the deluge on to firm soil, they had to find their way through unending difficulties, vexations, and dangers such as no rulers had ever faced before. By what they had achieved they had most thoroughly earned the special gratitude of the middle class and the aristocracy, and instead of this they were unremittingly abused and threatened. In common with so many politicians of the capitalist parties, they had not always been sufficiently cautious and discreet in dealing with less scrupulous members of their party, and not always well-advised in their choice of helpers; but they and the immense majority of their associates were honest, unpretentious, and not self-seeking: after a long period of office they were still poor men. President Ebert refused to allow any one of his sons to receive the smallest post in the State. This attitude, it is well known, has not become a tradition.

But these men who had become revolutionary leaders against their will (Severing and Braun were not yet in the forefront, and if they had been it would have made no difference) lacked from the very first the sacred fire, and in the struggle against the more radical spirits there began at once a drifting towards unreliable allies and away from everything in tune with the nature and purpose of a social revolution. They felt the task that had fallen to them to be a burdensome one; they and the German Social Democracy had had no longing for the day of revolt; August Bebel had regarded the monarchy as an entirely tolerable form of state; the Republic had been regarded as Utopian, their ambition had not reached so far. The ill-considered decisions of July 1914 had shown only too convincingly the immense dangers of a conduct of the state that was free of all control and all possibility of control; and from then on I was one of those

who demanded a parliamentary system. Until then the destiny of the nation had depended on the ideas and the sudden impulses of a single individual. He had settled these things with a few deferential subordinates, themselves revelling in the sense of their high importance and wisdom, and neither the nation nor its representatives had been allowed the slightest knowledge of what was going on behind the palace walls. That could never be allowed again. But as the German Socialists made progress in the parliamentary field they inevitably sacrificed more and more of their revolutionary enthusiasm. So it was in every country. Everywhere the revolutionary energies relaxed amid the smoothly working routine of ordinary parliamentary business. The German Social Democrats, like their comrades in England and France, had long been content with "evolution," and, indeed, "gradualism."

No, they were not prepared, they crossed the Rubicon with reluctance. There might be something of exaltation in waking up famous one morning like Byron, but it was less pleasant to find oneself in the morning supreme commander of the Revolution after going to bed as a member of the respectable middle class. Especially if one were convinced that the Revolution was a particularly stupid affair. It was impossible that politicians of the Left parties, if they still had their wits about them and could weigh pros and cons, should desire the fall of the monarchy at that moment or have any eagerness to come into power themselves in those November days, either alone or even as leaders in a coalition. They had had no part in the diplomacy that preceded the war, and no influence over the conduct of the war; they had no share in the responsibility for the military defeats; and were they now to conclude this peace, which was only to be attained

under fearfully hard and perhaps absolutely ruinous conditions? Were they to do this service to their reactionary opponents? Were they themselves to face the tragic struggle and the inevitable humiliations, while those others kept out of the way, laughing up their sleeve, looked on from a comfortable distance, and awaited the hour of their return to power? That was contrary to all political sense, as well as to all logic and justice. It would have been a thousand times wiser for them to leave it to the Empire with its parties and partisans and its generals to face the terrible liabilities of the peace negotiations, not to put their own signature to the treaty, not to let that disastrous shadow fall across the path of a newly created Republic, not to begin the new chapter of history with that page. After that peace William II would plainly be unable to remain Emperor, and meanwhile there would have been time to consider the organization of the State.

But such considerations were blown sky-high by the explosion. Revolutions have never behaved with the docility that would have suited the tacticians, and have always run on ahead of those who believed that the right moment had not yet come. Even the Russian Bolshevik revolution took little account of Lenin's plans for it, and what now looks as if it had been a system thought out in advance to the last detail, was in reality extracted bit by bit from its guiding intelligence by the unceasing drive of the movement. Lenin formed the masses, but the masses formed Leninism.

The demonstration of the sources that united to form the revolutionary torrent should be the task of an impartial and objective historian. But when has any judgment of a past period that still projects into the present been impartial and

objective? It would be absurd to attempt to tell in a few rapid sentences of the vast achievements during the war and the sufferings the German nation endured through four years. The wonder that they could have been endured is exceeded by the wonder that they should so soon have been forgotten. In all the belligerent countries the news of death burst from the field into the family circle, and the same grief found vent in every language. But in Germany the news came to people weakened and unmanned by hunger, to mothers roving in despair in search of some little bit of miserable *ersatz* food—substitute, all-adulterate food—for their whimpering children. Arrogance, graspingness, caste spirit, all defiant of psychology, did much mischief. The smallest matters were capable of playing more powerfully than the greatest on public opinion: a menu from an officers' club might excite more bitterness than an order to attack which destroyed thousands of lives and achieved nothing. For four years the flags had been hung out again and again. Quite recently the army command had declared that all the enemy's reserves had been destroyed, and this time we should enter Paris. All this had been nothing but delusion and self-deception. Suddenly everyone was face to face with the truth, and the house of cards collapsed. Agitators had been going about, talking at the backs of the houses, in the courtyards, at the street corners, among groups of timid listeners, protesting against the continuance of the war; leaflets and pamphlets had been distributed, and many grieving hearts had been opened readily to the forbidden propaganda. But this propaganda was concerned almost entirely with the necessity for peace, the shameless profiteering of the war industries, the criminal irresponsibility of the annexationist armchair heroes, with militarism and capital

and with the social paradise in which the proletariat must rule on the Moscow model; and although the idea of the Republic was naturally bound up with all this, the word seldom made its appearance in propagandist literature or speeches. Moreover, most people no longer had sufficient mental energy or power of logical thought to paint themselves pictures of the future, and ideas of this sort flitted past only in quite indefinite outlines. Imagination could go no farther than the moment of deliverance, the signal that should call a halt to the carnage and all the suffering.

The nation felt no actual hatred for the Kaiser. No strong feeling of this sort found expression on the rare occasions when he was mentioned. His personality was not sufficiently consistent to give rise to such feelings. Moreover, so much fun had been made of him that the transition to passionate anger did not come readily. One hit made against the dynasty was the satirical riddle that went all over the country: What family is coming out of the war with six sons, all alive? But the people who were bitterly hated were the industrial war profiteers, for whom the war could not last too long, and all the men sitting in comfort behind the lines or at home who were keeping up the cry that there could be no peace without great gains for Germany (and themselves). There was hatred of the owners of well-filled larders, in which fantastic rows of hams were imagined, and of medical men who would certify a father of a family as "fit for active service" even if he had heart disease. William II, who used to play the army commander in manœuvres and would lead a cavalry charge in mimic warfare, had not pushed himself into prominence at any time during the war, and was not held responsible for the mistakes and miscalculations of the strategists.

In the days of peace William II had never seen anything but festive crowds, lining the streets and cheering. At the outbreak of war he had spoken to the people, from a balcony. During the dark days of crisis he had allowed himself to believe that his people were merely being roused against him by worthless agitators, and that he was loved and popular. The time had come now for him to go among the people, no longer to address them in resounding tirades from aloft but to talk to them as comrades in misfortune; but the simple language of these men and women was foreign to him. His "divine right" had merely been touched up with a few concessions to modern times; beneath the class of his legionaries, his *triarii*, he had known only "subjects"; and if it had been suggested to him that he should approach a crowd, not to say shake hands with them, he would have been deterred from any such extravagance by a perfectly honest fear of germs. At the moment when he ought to have been close to his people, he fled from them.

It was learnt on October 31 that William II had gone secretly that morning, without informing Prince Max's Government, to G.H.Q. He was suspicious, there was something sinister now about Berlin, men were slinking about like menacing ghosts; in his own entourage every face was strained and anxious; there was an atmosphere and a reticence that suggested a hospital. He was afraid that this Prince Max and his accomplices would carry the scandal too far, that in the end they might want him to abdicate, and in this place there was nobody left to rely on, one was surrounded here with treason. The only safety was with the army, which would fight and die for its Emperor; he must get there as quickly as possible, without the loss of another hour.

There was enormous excitement in governmental and



political quarters at the news of the flight—for that was the only name given to this departure. The Cabinet met at once, and it was decided to induce the Kaiser to return; the High Command was rung up, but in vain. William II was not to be tempted back; he kept silent and stayed where he was, sheltering behind the broad backs of the soldiers. The Berliners told one another that he had placed himself under the protection of the reactionary generals and was going to march the troops against the people; thus something of the nature of real revolutionary excitement gradually developed. When William II left the royal apartments so quietly, the door closed behind him, and he had locked himself out.

On the following morning everyone was talking of coming disturbances, and households made provision as well as they could against expected strikes. In the afternoon Herr Wahnschaffe, Secretary of State and Head of the Chancellery, asked me to go to see him, and sent me his official car—a necessary facility at a time when there were few opportunities of transport. Herr Wahnschaffe was a handsome man, tall, slender, erect, but with the stiffness of which no dancing master can divest a Prussian ex-officer. He had attractive, regular features, with a short, carefully trimmed blond imperial, and anybody who inferred from his rather too stiff carriage any lack of alertness of intelligence would have been mistaken. Herr Wahnschaffe had a great deal of natural, chivalrous courtesy, and a talent for mediation always tactfully employed and kept within its due sphere. Everybody knew that he was simply out to find the best solution of any problem and would not let the official attitude shut out realities; he was thus popular with all parties. He was not a discovery of the new régime, but had already served well under all the war-time Chancellors. Now he was

the intermediary between Prince Max's government and the High Command.

He came straight to the point, telling me, as, of course, I had expected, that he wanted to discuss the question of the Kaiser. In Munich, he said, there was great excitement; the Premier, Herr von Lerchenfeld, was extremely nervous; demonstrations were being held again everywhere that evening. The rumour that the Kaiser intended to carry out a military coup had been widely spread in Munich, even more than elsewhere, but there was not a word of truth in it. The Kaiser had gone to Headquarters only in connexion with military questions and was returning shortly. I suggested that there was no absolute necessity to trust these assurances, and Herr Wahnschaffe, by his manner and cautious replies, betrayed a like incredulity. But could I not telephone, he asked, to my Munich correspondent, the Social Democrat Auer, who was to take the chair at the demonstrations, and authorize him to state that all the rumours of coups were regarded in Berlin as wildly fanciful? If the rumours in Munich were not combated, there would be paving stones flying about before the evening was over, and irreparable harm might be done.

I did as he asked, and telephoned from his room there and then to Munich; but I felt sure that he had only made use of this cock-and-bull story as an opening for the conversation, for the Government had plenty of representatives in Munich who could have spread the official assurances with more authority.

He went on at once to a general discussion of the problem. He accepted the view that the Kaiser's abdication was inevitable, but was anxious to show consideration for him and to give him time to get used to the idea; he was also

anxious about the preservation of the unity of the Reich. I replied that what he had just told me about Bavaria showed plainly that the unity of the country would be much more likely to be endangered by a refusal to abdicate.

He went on to say that really the Kaiser was not quite getting justice. It was true enough that William II had a great deal to answer for and had made some bad mistakes; but he had had no desire for the war, and he, Wahnschaffe, had heard the Kaiser talk about it with genuine grief. All I could say in reply to that was that it was all true enough, but unhappily the situation was not to be controlled by sentimentalities. The only thing that could be done now was to try to postpone the formal renunciation of the throne until the conclusion of peace, and the ill-advised departure had added to the difficulties in that respect among others. Herr Wahnschaffe nodded gloomily, and although he said nothing it was evident that his judgment of things did not differ greatly from mine.

He rang me up again next day. Hour by hour I was noticing fresh evidence of the way the postponement of the abdication issue was becoming less and less possible: pressure was being put from all sides for the abdication to be demanded, and men like Harden, who believed in Wilson, were declaring to their public with a contagious confidence that after this sacrifice of the imperial Isaac a better peace would be obtained. Austria and Hungary had accepted the armistice conditions dictated to them. These conditions had staggered Berlin, had been felt to be almost grotesque, and now Germany was open to attack from that side, and threatened on every frontier.

Herr Wahnschaffe wanted to come to see me, but I preferred to go to him. He felt the need for another dis-

cussion of the abdication question, and amid all his diplomatic reticence it was evident from what he said that William had no intention of abdicating: he imagined himself safe within the military lines, and regarded anybody who tried to convey to him any inkling of the truth as a liar and a traitor. In that case, I said, there was no point in offering advice. Wahnschaffe asked whether I was thinking of any particular advice, and what sort of advice. If I were a friend of the Kaiser, I replied, I should advise him to send a telegram to Wilson, by arrangement with the Chancellor, on the receipt of the armistice conditions, and to say in it:

"Is it my person, as seems to follow from your Notes, that stands in the way of an acceptable peace for Germany? I am ready to sacrifice myself for the German nation and the peace of the world, and to renounce the throne, if at that price I can purchase milder and more tolerable conditions."

Either that proposal would be accepted, and then the Kaiser could retire in good order, and without humiliation; or the offer would be rejected, as, indeed, was more probable, and then for the time—for the time only, of course—public opinion would be a little less impatient, and it might still be possible to maintain the existing régime until the conclusion of peace.

Wahnschaffe considered this idea "well worth considering" and "very interesting"; after all, it was fairly obvious. But it was evident that he felt sure that this medicine would prove no more palatable to his very difficult patient.

Immediately after this conversation there came the first news of the naval rising at Kiel. On the following day the complete victory of the revolutionaries was reported. On November 6 there came the same news, or very much the same, from Hamburg, Lübeck, Geestemünde, Schwerin, and

many other places in the country; already Soldiers' Councils were in control everywhere, and the flood had come close to Berlin. Any discussion about the choice of "a better opportunity" had become empty and ridiculous.

I did not look on at the Revolution of November 9 from its points of departure or its centres, but only from the margin of events. But did not Stendhal describe the Battle of Waterloo by giving merely scraps of incident, the smoke of the guns, a fleeing cavalry squadron, episodes of a moment's duration, the distant offshoots of the actual engagements; and is not his picture rightly regarded as incomparable and placed by all who have a knowledge of art high above the "complete" battle pictures? And Stendhal had not been anywhere near Waterloo; he had no more been present at that battle than at many other events of war and peace about which he wrote as though he had taken part in them. He had fought only by the Mincio; he had been present through the Russian campaign and at the battle of Bautzen, watching from the comfort of his carriage. But, as Taine said of him, he had "*admirables divinations*," and behind his "*petits faits*," his details plucked from the general story, one could see the fluctuations of the battle, the critical turning point, and Napoleon's collapse. Is there not at times, in some old and half-destroyed fresco on a church wall in Italy, a touching reality, a poetry, something that grips and startles, for the very reason that no more than fragments of the painting are recognizable, the head of an Apostle, part of the kneeling figure of a benefactor, traces of a Madonna? The details, even the apparently insignificant ones, may leave in the mind a more lively and complete impression than the most elaborate representation of the whole, which never can be the whole. All this I have mentioned by way of apology for

the scrappiness of the entries which I made at the time in my diary and reproduce here.

November 8. There is feverish tension. Will the Kaiser abdicate, or will he try to put up any resistance? Yesterday afternoon the Social Democrats resolved to withdraw from the Government if there is no abdication; thus, if the Kaiser refuses, or even hesitates too long, the present Cabinet will disappear, and probably, even if only momentarily, the workers will achieve unity. Their leaders will then be simply carried along. Every minute some acquaintance or complete stranger is ringing me up and declaring that William has already abdicated or has refused to, or is on his way with an army against Berlin. News is coming in from all over the country of the progress of the revolution. All the people who made such a show of their loyalty to the Kaiser, and were so proud of their decorations, are lying low; not one is moving a finger in defence of the monarchy. Everywhere the soldiers are quitting the barracks. In Berlin the railway stations are occupied by troops, and there is still a double guard outside the Palace, the Ministry of War, and other public buildings; externally everything is as usual. In the men's heads, under the helmets, there is probably a whirl of ideas: this is the last time on guard, to-morrow, or to-night, the free life will begin. Among the civilians many are frightened and apprehensive, hiding their money, providing themselves with the little acetylene lamps with their horrible stink, so as to have light whatever happens; some of the people I know who have villas in Grunewald or on the banks of the Havel are shutting them up, feeling too isolated and unprotected there, and coming back to town. They are all afraid of the Spartacists, and their one hope now is in the Social Democracy, which they know is sensible and will not smash everything up at once. At 1 p.m., still no reply from the Kaiser. The Social Democratic party executive, which is so keenly anxious for a good-will settlement, is still ready to have patience and is extending its ultimatum period.

Toward midnight Ferdinand von Stumm telephoned to me from the Foreign Ministry that the Kaiser is sure to give

way, but unfortunately the old régime cannot adapt itself quickly enough; precious time is being lost, we shall be having the revolution in Berlin to-morrow, and whether it will be possible then to escape from Bolshevism is very doubtful. Just after this Konrad Haussmann rang up: there is nothing more the Government can do—it has described the situation to the Kaiser in the plainest possible language and has given him its opinion. Later in the night it was announced that Lieutenant-General Linsingen, the Commander-in-Chief "in the Marches," the military commander of Berlin, had resigned. So even these servants of the monarchy, with all their grand airs of yesterday, are now giving up the idea of resistance in Berlin, and abandoning the field without a blow.

November 9. This morning my barber told me that the Königin-Augustastraße end of our street (the Hohenzollernstraße), the canal bridge in front of it, all the other canal bridges, and the whole district, are occupied by troops with machine guns. The Admiralty building in Königin-Augustastraße (the canal embankment), close by us, is to be defended, and so we are in the middle of the field of operations. Rather awkward because of the children coming from school. Naturally they took a keen interest at once in the hand grenades; a friendly soldier explained their purpose and the way to use them. I went to the office, and found everything more or less normal on the way. There were only soldiers on guard at various street corners, and in the Linkstraße, near the Potsdamer Platz, a company in field uniform, with an elderly officer, who walked silently up and down and now and again surveyed his men. Defence measures of this sort have been ostentatiously taken at all "strategic points," especially in the neighbourhood of the Palace. Thus, in spite of the hurried departure of Herr von Linsingen, there must still be a military authority somewhere.

At about a quarter to one the message came off the paper's morse machines that the Kaiser had abdicated. As I wrote my leader the news of the latest happenings were brought in hot succession, second by second, into my room. The red flag had been hoisted over the *Vorwärts* building. The Kaiser Alexander Regiment had gone over to the Revolution; the soldiers had rushed out of the barrack gates and fraternized

with the shouting crowd outside; men shook their hands with emotion, women and girls stuck flowers in their uniforms and embraced them. Similar reports came in one after another about all the other regiments. The sentries and military posts and machine guns which a few hours before had provided the appearance of a plan of defence have suddenly disappeared, and with them the broad-shouldered policemen, pillars and symbols of the imperial order and stern custodians of the Kaiser's subjects. Liebknecht, restless and excited, has made a speech to his supporters from the balcony of the Palace, and the choice of this rostrum was no doubt intended to give the people to understand that now he is the new master and no one else. Members of my staff came in and told me that the officers are being stripped of their cockades and gold lace—needlessly, and in an ugly spirit,—that the trams have stopped, that the revolutionaries have taken possession of the official Wolff News Agency, and that the red flag is now waving over the Brandenburg Gate.

Ulrich Rauscher, full of life as always, and Dr. Kurt Hiller had been waiting for me for some time at the office, in the mistaken hope of learning some special news from me, or perhaps just feeling the need to unburden their minds. The dour Hiller, a writer always ready with his bludgeon, doctrinaire and sophistical in pacifist discussion, has often argued at large with me, and I was a little surprised to see him to-day. The three of us set out westwards about four along the Leipzigerstrasse. Endless processions of soldiers and workers were passing without a break along the road; or rather it was a single interminable procession that marched past us, going eastwards. The fronts of the houses looked dead; the blinds had been pulled down in front of all the shop windows and doors, and not a sign of life was visible at the windows above: every shop and office had been deserted by its staff. After all, it is like that here every Sunday, and it is only because of the general atmosphere that to-day it made quite a different, unaccustomed impression. Shopkeepers and employees, the whole population, men and women, of this shopping quarter, were hurrying home on the pavements, most of them pressing on, but some curious and stopping on the kerb now and again to look



about them. There were also well-dressed people from other districts to be seen, but not very many; there were even women among them; they were going about in a spirit of adventure, like bold Cook's tourists at the Pyramids in search of a thrill.

In the procession workers and soldiers marched alongside one another as they had chanced to come together. Most of the workers were of middle age, with grave bearded faces. They had not had the army training in fatigues, but they had the trade unionists' corporate spirit, and marched conscientiously in order. Some of them were shouldering rifles which had been handed to them from some store. The soldiers' rifles were dangling across their backs, they had pushed their caps askew, they were cheeky and jolly, smoking furiously and waving to the girls. Everybody in the procession had a red badge in the button-hole or on the breast; the marshals of the procession, marching alongside with rifles slung over their shoulders, were distinguished by red armlets. In the midst of the slowly marching throng great red flags were being carried, and it was astonishing that at a time of shortage and requisitioning of all fabrics there was so much still left of this red cloth. Alongside the procession the motor cars of the Revolution rushed past, evidently on important business, for otherwise why such haste? Army lorries passed by with the red flag; they bore soldiers and red-ribboned civilians, crouching, sitting, kneeling or standing alongside machine guns, all in some fighting attitude and ready to fire, although there was no sign of any enemy about. There were also elegant smaller cars, with five or six soldiers in them, similarly ready to fire, going to and fro across the city on patrol duty. I said to myself that this is the thing that distinguishes modern wars and revolutions from those of the past: at the outbreak of every war and in every revolution the cars are taken at once from their owners as the very first thing, and every fight for power or freedom begins with the pride and joy of the new speed merchants in their attack on the record.

The procession was endless. Here and there a few people would try to start a song. But the singing did not spread to any extent, and soon died out again. From time to time there came from the ranks a cheer for the Revolution or

for freedom or for the people. Sometimes it was answered by groups of spectators, but it had to be realized that in this respectable business street the spirit of noisy demonstrations had not yet developed. Among the marchers I noticed a few soldiers who had taken off their tunics and hung them loosely over their shoulders like capes, and inside out at that. To increase the effect they had actually turned the sleeves inside out, so that they hung loosely, showing the lining, like empty sausage skins. This was the only touch of the picturesque in the whole procession, a picturesque bit of disorderliness to show that there was now an end of war and war discipline. You can wear your uniform now how you like, and indeed there are no uniforms any longer, only remains, still surviving, of a long period of madness and horror. Once more we have become human beings, no longer forced into blind obedience, no longer compelled to kill, or to jump out of foul trenches into the hail of shells and to hurl ourselves against wire entanglements. But as though the dull weight of all this oppressed them, and the nightmare was only half dispelled, these soldiers had to keep reminding themselves by some visible evidence that now they were free men, and so they had turned their sleeves inside out.

But, needless to say, in this crowd that incessantly streamed along, there were other figures who marched in rigid precision, and who certainly were not pleased with this slovenliness. And most of the leaders and marshals and all the men around the machine guns on the lorries, or resting the butts of their rifles on their knees in commandeered private cars, were manifestly filled with iron revolutionary determination. They were tanned by the sun and the open air, and probably they had only recently come from fighting in France or Russia or in the Balkans. Some of them, with their hard faces, their steeled muscles, their rather gloomy self-confidence, and their sharp, commanding glance, looked like Ironsides from Cromwell's day, and had a certain sinewy elegance. They may have been locksmiths or chauffeurs or acrobats in the past; now they had this quality—though it was not the same elegance as that of the slender officers of the Guards or of a carefully tended flower in the garden, swaying aristocratically on its long stalk.

In front of the Ministry of War in the Leipzigerstrasse revolutionary guards are now posted, in place of the Royal Prussian guards of this morning, and fulfilling their duties with exactly the same courtesy and sense of responsibility. And in front of the Admiralty office by the Canal, which the Admirals proposed yesterday to defend, soldiers and sailors with red armlets are now on sentry duty, and two large cars with men, machine guns and red flags are in waiting for any service. Many ill-favoured men of doubtful character are going about armed on errands of their own, and the unmistakable riff-raff are appearing in the streets. The genuine revolutionaries, workers and soldiers, are clearly fighting shy of these elements, as a matter of honour. The utterly changed appearance of Berlin, however, and the endless processions of demonstrators everywhere, are upsetting the nerves of sensitive people who have already gone through too much, and the old medical friend whom I found at home when I got back was pouring out his grief and despair, raging at my boys when they leaned out of the window to look at a procession passing by, and prophesying apocalyptic horrors and the end of the world. But if everyone is to indulge in a little nervous breakdown of his own it will be impossible, and in any case hardly worth while, to bring new order out of the chaos.

At 7 p.m. I went back to the office. The trams were not running. Such other diminishing transport as the war had still left us had now been stopped entirely, and along the dark and desolate embankments, faintly lit here and there by the few electric lamps still in use, there went the same motor cars with armed guards ready to shoot, even more ominous now, with the almost complete darkness, than in the afternoon. The few pedestrians were hurrying home, as careful as Lot himself not to look behind them. But around the Potsdamer Platz there waited a packed crowd of interested onlookers, just as amenable to the control of the occasional armed marshals (simple civilians) as they have always been to the police. As I reached the Charlottenstrasse crossing in the Leipzigerstrasse there began a furious rattling of shots. The sound was so loud and sharp that the shots might have been striking the walls of the neighbouring houses. A young man who was in no hurry told me that the

machine guns had been turned on the Marstall, the royal mews, from the windows of which royalist officers and cadets had been shooting at the revolutionaries. That sounds hardly credible: the officers and cadets are scarcely likely to have entrenched themselves in the middle of the city in so untenable a fortress, and to have begun from there a heroic but insane bombardment. Possibly excited imaginations had made a dauntless garrison of officers out of a forgotten stable-boy and the porter. At other spots too this peaceful and bloodless revolution is being decorated with a little romanticism.

At 1 a.m. the morning edition was ready, I was able to leave the composing room, where everything had been carried through with the same care as on less revolutionary nights, and after a short stay in the machine rooms I was able to go quietly home. Once more, with a friend now, along the Leipzigerstrasse. It was deserted, and we met only a few soldiers or sailors with their arms round their girls. There was nobody now to punish them if they went love-making till early morning; and for the first time they had needed no "leave." When we reached the Leipziger Platz we found the road blocked by a line of sentries. About fifty or sixty night-strollers, men and women, were waiting to see what was up—it might be more interesting than going to bed—and staring across the barrier into the darkness beyond. The sentries said to us: "There is shooting going on in the Potsdamer Platz. You cannot get through here." We told them we wanted to get home and there was no other way. One of them said: "If you care to take the risk—try on the right there by the Palace Hotel, and run across the road at the Potsdamer Platz: but be quick about it!"

We crossed to the right, and hurried round the semicircle of grass and flowerbeds, between the railings and the walls of the houses. When we came to the Potsdamer Platz we found its whole area occupied on our left as far as the station by troops, who stood in formation awaiting the order to fire. All we could see in the gloom was the outlines of shadow pictures, for the lights had been turned off and the Platz was in complete darkness; of course it was all the more fantastic and ghostly. We rushed across to the Bellevuestrasse. A non-commissioned officer promoted to the com-

mand was galloping along the asphalt, shouting orders, on an unruly horse; its hoofs made a hard metallic ring. From the railway there came at the double, but in faultless order, a detachment of sailors, who had evidently come by train; and at that moment, we had no notion where or against what, there began a wild shooting. Another detachment rushed out of the Bellevuestrasse with bayonets levelled. We were almost run down, but gained the left pavement in time and took refuge in the porch of the Hotel Esplanade. There we found welcome cover. Hotel servants were pressing their noses against the glass door of the entrance; the building was well bolted and barricaded.

The storming troops—what the devil were they out to storm?—were already in the Potsdamer Platz; the street ahead of us was empty. When we had begun to recover our breath I noticed that we were not alone: other spectators had sought the small porch as refuge and stage box: three women shared this hiding place with us—three street dealers in the lusts of the flesh. One shabbily bedizened with a huge feather hat that had outlasted the years of war, the two others with nothing conspicuous about them, no seductive splendours of toilet. They looked out tensely, dumb and motionless, pale ghosts from a non-classic underworld, and took no notice whatever of us. They stared out raptly into the night. Was there to be killing, would the gladiators in the arena tear one another to pieces, what were the men still waiting for? The continual crackle of the firing stirred and excited the senses, but there were no visible casualties. After a few minutes we ventured on, reached the dark Tiergarten, and continued on our way home without further incident. Our three neighbours in the porch had shown no sign of noticing our departure.

November 10. The shooting went on in the Potsdamer Platz throughout the night, and I still have no idea of the reasons for this battle and its strategic significance. Probably it was not a battle at all, as there was no enemy. The total impotence of the monarchists with, to put it mildly, the complete absence of any inclination to resist, the abandonment of the old régime by all its supporters and privileged protectors without lifting a finger in its defence, has been so astonishing to the revolutionaries that they simply do

not know what to make of it. They still think, as they did yesterday at the royal mews, that some opponent ready to fight to the last is hiding somewhere, and that an attack is being planned from some ambush. Thus last night they seem to have believed that royalist regiments were marching in from Potsdam. That still leaves unexplained the wild shooting that could be heard far around until the morning.

Soon after I got back home last night I was rung up on the private line from the editorial and technical department:

"Adolf Hoffmann speaking. I am in your composing room and wanted to tell you that my comrades and I have taken over your *Berliner Volkszeitung*, which will appear to-morrow morning as our organ, the organ of the Independents and of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council."

Hoffmann was a member of the Prussian Lower House. I did not know him personally, but he was famous for his broad wit and his cheerful assaults on grammar, and a very popular man. (The *Volkszeitung*, which he and the Independents, the Left, radical wing of the Social Democrats, had "taken over," belongs to the same company and is produced in the same building as the *Berliner Tageblatt*.) I replied to Adolf Hoffmann that the "taking over" was a joke, and a worse joke than his usual ones, and that I was sorry to have left just before he arrived and so to have missed the pleasure of meeting him. He told me that the *Lokal-anzeiger* had become the organ of Liebknecht and the Spartacists, and the Independents must have a newspaper themselves; the only law now was the law laid down by the Revolution. I demanded that in that case he should at least state at the head of the paper, for the information of its perplexed subscribers, that the Independents had forcibly commandeered the paper and made it into their mouth-piece, against the will of the owners. He agreed to that. For the rest of the night there was peace.

This morning I went out with my wife and children; they were determined to see what a revolution is like. Except for occasional intervals, the air was filled with the crackling noise of mysterious fighting, and the motor patrols were incessantly going to and fro. There was an enormous red flag over the Admiralty. In Unter den Linden there was a crowd of many thousands of people, hoping to find some-

thing to see, and manifestly attracted by the firing, the sound of which came from the direction of the Palace. A great deal of history has passed through the "Linden," and among other recollections there would come back to those who stood there the picture of the great funeral procession that had slowly followed the coffin of old William I to the vault, amid the roll of drums; at its head, matchless in the majestic gravity of his aloofness, strode the old Emperor's grandson. The Brandenburg Gate had then been hung with long streamers of black bunting: now red flags waved from it in the November wind.

In the afternoon six gentlemen called at my home; three of them I knew and three I had not before met. They were lawyers, industrialists, a professor, and a university lecturer. They wanted me to take the lead in founding a great Democratic middle-class party, and expressed the opinion that on account of my attitude during the war I was in the best position to do this. I had no desire to enter into the question whether they were justified in their confidence in me, but already yesterday and to-day I had been considering the same plan, and since the deputation consisted of people of distinction, and indecision would have been the worst of all things at that moment, I consented. The middle class is frightened and at its wits' end, not knowing what to do or where to turn; most of them are fluttering like birds who have fallen out of the nest and do not know where to go. They must be found another nest, and those who are simply asking all the time "What is to happen now?" must be given the courage that comes to them only with being in a numerous company and having something to lean on. For a new, free state it is possible so far to count on the Social Democracy and the Centre, and that is numerically a great deal, but not enough. The Social Democracy and Catholicism are incontestably two forces of immense importance, and at present the two of the greatest importance. They not only have the great hosts at their back, but are now the only compact and well-knit bodies in the country. But Germany is Germany, and anybody with his eyes open and able to look ahead cannot accept these two strong pillars as enough in the long run to give the needed support to a republic—for the Republic has become the only possible thing. Whether

it will have a long life in any case is impossible to say as yet, but if at its birth it has only a Social Democratic and a Catholic godfather it will be burdened from the outset with a mass of dissent and hostility, and will be discredited for almost all who might be won over to it from other camps. Thus it is necessary now to organize those strata of the non-Catholic middle-class who are at all inclined toward democratic ideas, in view of the elections to a National Assembly which it must be hoped will take place—even if it has to be admitted that not everything is good metal that is thus welded together. Naturally large numbers of people will cling to this life-line only in order to escape from the mortal danger that seems to threaten them.

Thus I told the six gentlemen that I was willing, and proposed first to invite a number of carefully chosen persons, not compromised in any way, to meet for discussion, to draft an appeal, and to get to work at once. Subsequently I telephoned to Professor Alfred Weber and asked him to join us; I was glad to notice the burst of enthusiasm with which he welcomed the plan.

November 11. In the afternoon I went with Otto Nuschke, editor of the *Volkszeitung*, to the Chancellor's palace, where we were to discuss the coup of Adolf Hoffmann and the Independents with Scheidemann and other "Commissars of the People"—the members of the improvised Socialist Government have considered this the proper title for the moment. The same well-drilled, noiseless old attendants who had opened and closed the doors here in the time of William II, took us to the room on the ground floor which had been Bethmann's ante-room. The first to join us was Herr Kurt Baake, formerly on the staff of *Vorwärts*, now Head of the Chancellery: he bore all the outward signs of doing very well indeed. Then Scheidemann came in, bothered and nervous. While we were reporting the case he shook his head now and again to show his disapproval. Before Scheidemann actually said anything, Kurt Baake interposed softly, simply oozing wisdom: he could only advise giving way and accepting things as they were. Rather astonished at this, I asked Scheidemann:

"Is that what you think too?"

He threw up his arms in perplexity:



"Yes, the Independents now have the power; I have no soldiers, what can I do?"

I pointed out that after all, at yesterday's meeting of representatives of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in the Busch Circus, the soldiers voted with the Majority Socialists; but the argument failed to move him; he merely repeated: "I have no soldiers," and gazed into the distance, evidently looking for the soldiers.

Landsberg came in: a very clever lawyer, representing the Majority Socialists, with Ebert and Scheidemann, in the Provisional Government: the other three members represent Hugo Haase's radical wing. We put the matter to him.

"Yes," he said, "we are in an impossible situation. Haase is much stronger than we are. If things go on like this we shall have no alternative but to resign."

At that moment a grey-haired attendant announced, in the same tone in which he used to announce Ambassadors:

"The Supreme Soldiers' Council."

It was obviously an unwelcome announcement, and there was general agitation and perplexity. Landsberg said under his breath: "More trouble!" Scheidemann jumped up in annoyance—"That lot again!" We quietly departed. The impression given by the scene was almost that the executioner and his men were at the door.

Outside in the vestibule the Supreme Soldiers' Council were waiting impatiently. As far as I remember there were four or five of them, all in faultless officer's uniform, well brushed, with broad red armlets. They were all tall, thin men, and all doing their best to maintain an expression of severity and grimness—the pose of a Saint-Just delivering sentence. I recognized the writer Colin Ross, the ex-Prussian Deputy Cohen-Reuss, and Brutus Molkenbuhr. In themselves they were entirely decent and agreeable men, but now they were statues, they thought it the right thing to ignore my presence, and only Cohen-Reuss shook my hand—coolly and in a very reserved manner. Brutus Molkenbuhr was rather shorter than the rest, but he had the surname of a father with a long and honourable record as a Social Democrat, and on top of that he had been christened Brutus—a huge piece of luck with a revolution in progress.

There was a shout of "Captain von Beerfeldel" and

Beerfelde came out of another waiting room, tall and erect, stiff, majestic, magnificent, exceedingly grave. He has an uncommonly interesting head: bushy eyebrows, with hairs sticking out like needles, and he has the stride of the young Napoleon. I have met Beerfelde (he was an officer on the General Staff) several times in the course of his strange spiritual journeyings; he first came to me with a mission from the Theosophical salon of Frau von Moltke. Some of his activities, well-meant as they were, did not appeal to me, and at times I was obliged actively to oppose them, but I have always had for him, as most people would, the sympathy naturally aroused by a fine specimen of a zealot born out of due time. No enthusiast and dreamer could be more selfless and sincere and single-minded than he, and none was so ill-suited to our age as this Knight of the Grail and child-minded Quixote, mystic and social idealist. He always stood outside all parties, and now, too, is just as remote from all the various revolutionary camps. But this afternoon he has gone with the other members of the Supreme Soldiers' Council to the Provisional Government, looking straight ahead, with a stern and commanding expression, from under his bushy eyebrows, to call the Government to account in the name of the people. I can still see him as the door was opened to admit him and he entered the room at the head of the group, with the firm step of a ruler of men. Then I went away from that house, in which I have had many interesting experiences, but none more surprising.

During the days that followed I had many discussions and conferences and a great deal of trouble and vexation in connexion with the founding of the party. I had to negotiate with men not all of whom were to my liking, and in between these meetings, and in the moments between my other activities, I wrote the manifesto to voters with democratic sympathies. On November 14 there came to a conference in my office, with several of his friends, Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, who was then the Managing Director of the National Bank and

the leader of a group who called themselves "Young Liberals." This group, most of them elderly, had formed themselves into a sort of Brigade of Youth of the gouty National Liberals, to give the impression that a new branch was growing out of that withered old trunk. Schacht and his friends wanted to join us and then, no doubt to bring in with them their old party family. They did not at all want, of course, to go so far as the manifesto required, and *sich zur Republik bekennen*, give allegiance to the Republic; they were only prepared *die Republik anerkennen*—let us say, to countenance it. However, after a rather heated debate they made up their minds to become Republicans, and gave us their signatures.

It very soon proved that we had no need to fear a shortage of adherents; far from it—the danger was that the new party would prove all too attractive. Herr Fischbeck, the Prussian Minister of Commerce, told me that even Stinnes, von Borsig, and some other big industrialists of their kidney, had "seen light" and would like to join us, and at times it cost us a good deal of trouble to extricate ourselves from unexpected embraces of this sort. When the manifesto appeared on November 16 it included the pretty blunt phrase: "*Wir stellen uns auf den Boden der republikanischen Staatsform*"—"We are adopting as our basis the principle of republicanism." It was received with the warmest approval, but the comment was made, not entirely without justice, that among the signatories there were rather too many big capitalists. All the time I felt rather like old Noah facing a vast crowd pushing to get into the Ark, and compelled to keep on saying: "Sorry, full up."

At a later time I was often reproached for not having permitted Stresemann to sail in the Democratic ark. When Stresemann had really "seen light" and had become a

Chancellor hotly attacked by the Nationalists, the omniscient declared that we had made a terrible mistake in turning him away instead of warmly welcoming him and making him leader of the party. But there was no magic mirror in November 1918 to show the Stresemann of 1925; all we could see was the Stresemann who during the war had been an annexationist and a follower of Tirpitz, and who had declared that there was no need to be afraid of America because the Americans had no ships and could not cross the ocean. Even if the magic mirror had shown me the Stresemann of the future, it would have availed nothing and I could have done no differently, for a majority of the voters on whom we counted would have been guided by things as they were, and would have refused to vote for a party whose list included a candidate with such blunders in his record. For all that, it was painful to have to reject him, and a painful memory later, during the period when I stood near to him as a politician and a friend, and watched him until the last, suffering severely from grave ill-health and from the malignity of his enemies.

On November 18 he had come unannounced to one of our meetings, which we were holding in the residence of the President of the Reichstag. With him were several of his National Liberal party colleagues in the Prussian Parliament, including Friedberg, Lucas, and Weber; and a number of "Progressives" (*Freisinnige*) had also come uninvited and unwanted, since their names also would bring us no strength. Professor Alfred Weber, who at my desire had taken the chair in the foundation committee, rose at once and said that he was instructed to refuse all co-operation with members of the old parties who did not unreservedly accept the new programme, or were compromised by their past policy. We were

overwhelmed, he said, with adherents, and almost everyone who came to us warned us: "No compromise with the old discredited parties!" Alfred Weber was a man of strong feelings and delivered this verdict in very biting terms. Half a dozen times he told the intruders to their faces that they were compromised. There was a heated dispute and tempers were thoroughly roused. During the whole scene Stresemann sat silently in his place. I brought the unpleasant wrangling to an end by proposing an adjournment; I assumed that Stresemann and his friends would themselves consider it advisable to go away in the interval. This they did; when we resumed the sitting their places were empty.

The Provisional Government worked well and honestly to establish order, to calm the population, and to provide food for the hungry, and the walls of buildings were covered with endless proclamations in warning and appeal and promise. In the administrative offices of the Guards and in other official buildings I found young men, soldiers and civilians, who had seated themselves on the abandoned office chairs, cheerfully taking up their new responsibilities and working zealously and optimistically, but without experience, in the effort to satisfy a public that was continually crying for help and levelling complaints and accusations. But the Spartacists also were very active, working under Russian instructors; they were able to count on the hatred of the Independents for the Majority Socialists and on the support of Eichhorn, who was supposed to be President of Police, a man of the lower middle class, filled with the fury of the small shop-keeper turned Jacobin. Their task was easy, for at the time the people were asking only for words from them and for bread from their opponents. The rifles that had been brought back from the field to be kept at home, or sold for a

few pence to any who wanted them, were constantly to be heard, and many more waited in their corners for a signal for use on a greater scale. Many buildings, including the newspaper offices that might be honoured with an attack, were provided with guards, and Noske, who as Minister of War and Commander in Chief was organizing defence, offered me for the *Tageblatt* building a hundred of his "absolutely loyal and reliable" sailors. I said a hundred would be too many, a dozen would do, and twelve bright and lively young fellows were installed and billeted on us.

Kurt Eisner, Prime Minister of the Bavarian Republic, came to Berlin on November 22 for a conference of all the Republican heads of governments. On the following morning he telephoned to me that he would be pleased to see me. I was not well acquainted with him, had not met him for twenty years; I went with a little curiosity in the afternoon to the Bavarian Embassy, where he was staying. On the steps I was met by a young student, with his tie out of place and nothing particularly elegant about him, though this did not prevent him from being perhaps more intelligent than not a few of the magnificent young attachés of the past. He told me that Eisner was ready to see me at once, and took me upstairs without further ceremony into a little room. Here Eisner, with a regular revolutionary's beard and long grey hair, wearing a black coat and grey trousers too short for him, was standing dictating to a young man who worked with glowing zeal at a typewriter. Three other young men, probably students from Munich, formed a group round the master, who greeted me with a wave of the hand and, without allowing himself to be interrupted by the visit, continued dictating in some such words as this:

"The Bavarian Prime Minister enters a protest against the

attitude of ex-Field Marshal von Hindenburg."

He spoke in resonant tones, a little theatrically and obviously very pleased to have one more listener; with a further thunderous phrase he closed his protest against some action of Hindenburg's. Then we sat down at a table on which some cups with the remains of the afternoon coffee and a few cigarette ends added their contribution to the local colour, and he began to tell me of his Munich revolution. "Our revolution was really fine. There was no bloodshed, and it was a splendid fight: we all came out into the street and stormed the barracks." After adding detail to this historic picture with the gusto of the literary æsthete, he began to abuse the Berlin Government: it could not be trusted and was disliked abroad, especially by Clemenceau. All this differed from my own view, and as we could not agree he came back once more in the end to:

"You should have seen our revolution in Munich!"

In December the situation grew worse. On the evening of the 23rd Professor Eberstadt telephoned to me that sailors had made an assault on the University. They had done more than that. After a dispute on questions of pay they had dragged the commandant out of the garrison building in Unter den Linden and locked him up with his adjutant in the Royal Mews. There and in the Palace they had put up barricades. After that they forced their way into the Chancellery, and for an hour held Ebert and Landsberg prisoners. Then troops loyal to the Government came on the scene and the sailors withdrew.

On the following days the Palace was besieged by Government troops, and there was a tremendous bombardment. On New Year's eve, when my wife and I were celebrating "Sylvester"—seeing the old year out—with Max Reinhardt

and other friends in the restaurant under the Deutsches Theater, the harsh sounds of the shooting close at hand broke into the melodious Italian songs which Moissi was singing to us to the accompaniment of a guitar. On Sunday, January 5, 1919, the Spartacist revolt broke out in full force. My diary records what I saw and experienced:

Sunday, January 5. I was rung up about 5 p.m. from the *Berliner Tageblatt* office by the secretary in the editorial department. He told me that about a thousand armed Spartacists had drawn up in front of the building and were evidently determined to force their way in. I asked: "Are you alone?" He was alone, but fortunately not nervously inclined.

"And what are our twelve loyal sailors doing?"

"The loyal sailors went over at once to the besiegers."

I asked him to leave the building by a door at the back; I should be there as soon as possible to see what was going on. Then I set out.

There was a lot of firing, but it was impossible to say where. It was completely dark by the time I reached the crossing of Leipzigerstrasse and Charlottenstrasse. It was six o'clock, and once more the street lamps were unlit. But when I could see Schützenstrasse from Charlottenstrasse there were flickering in the wind at three or four places in front of the *Tageblatt* building the smoky red flames of an *auto da fé*. Where it crosses the Markgrafenstrasse the Schützenstrasse (on which one side of the building fronts) was blocked by lines of Spartacist volunteers, and the whole area round the *Tageblatt* building was invested. I saw no way of getting through, and could only guess that the low and not very vigorous flames were consuming the leaflets containing my manifesto for the elections to the National Assembly.

The naval headquarters from which our dozen carefully chosen protectors had been drawn were now in the Royal Mews buildings, facing the Palace; the buildings had been seized in December. I thought it might be interesting to have a talk with the comrades of our dozen, and went on towards the Mews, through empty, lifeless streets, with no



sign in them of risings and civil war. At the gate of the Mews I told some sailors who seemed to be engaged in a political discussion that I wanted to see Petty Officer Trost. I only knew from the papers that that was the name of the ringleader of the naval guard. I was told that Trost was not there, but Petty Officer Müller was upstairs in his room, and a man took me up to him. Petty Officer Müller was sitting at his desk, unoccupied: a handsome man with a short blond imperial. Two pistols were stuck in his belt in front of him. He listened very decently to my complaints and requests; he agreed with me that the desertion of our guards was an undeniable breach of the code of honour of the revolutionary sailors' corps. I asked him to give me twelve more of his comrades as an escort, so that I might try to get through to the *Tageblatt* office; he agreed at once and went down to the courtyard with me, to give the necessary orders.

In this great square space there was a very lively commotion, and evidently something was up. Sailors stood in groups arguing with one another. Machine-guns were lined up along one of the walls. A motor car came in; its occupants had apparently returned from a reconnaissance. Petty Officer Müller spoke in a low voice to the men in one of the groups. They looked at me. They were grand, splendidly bronzed young fellows, but their gestures and their lack of response showed plainly enough that the task of escorting me was not to their taste. They had all gone over to the Spartacists. Müller beckoned to me and I went over to the group. Most of them were frowning in silence; one of them said:

"It's not our job: what have we to do with these bourgeois?"

The group began to grow; men came up in curiosity, and wanted to know what was up. I spoke to them in a friendly way and tried to persuade the objectors that I was not a "bourgeois" but simply a worker like themselves. All in vain—it did not make the slightest impression on them. But one of them asked me whether I would have an "Eichhorn" cigarette, and held out a box which the "President of Police" had, no doubt, "won" somewhere, with many of its kind, for the benefit of his comrades.

"Then I will go with you," said the Petty Officer, to show that for him a pledged word was not to be played with. On this one of the men decided to come with us. On our way, in Hausvogteiplatz, we met another man, who joined us.

The fires in Schützenstrasse had gone out, but there was a smell everywhere of burnt paper. The line of sentries opened to let Petty Officer Müller and his comrades go through; they were regarded as friends. I was also allowed to go through, being so well protected and accordingly unsuspect.

The courtyard of the building is surrounded by the machine rooms, stores, and boiler house. Here, there loomed out of the darkness a crowd of armed figures. They were standing about or sitting on the great rolls of newsprint with their legs dangling and their rifles across their knees. Some were in uniform, some in poor civilian clothing, but in the gloom it all had the attraction of a night camp scene such as we may see on the stage—a scene arranged this time by a producer of no great distinction. I went up the stairs leading from the courtyard to the upper storeys of the main building, and came to the long composing room, now dark, deserted, and cold. From there into the editorial rooms. In the corridor someone brushed past me.

"Where are the leaders?" I asked. "There must surely be someone in command?"

He pointed to one of the rooms—a room belonging normally to one of the sub-editors for home affairs. I opened the door and found in the little room three men, busily smoking and a little astonished at the arrival of a visitor. They looked at us without moving. Petty Officer Müller greeted them, politely introduced me, and then disappeared, considering that his mission was ended. He could not have shown more decency or good manners if he had been a gentleman brought up at the English Court.

To start as well as possible I cheerfully apologized for our unpreparedness for receiving guests. But there were plenty of ash trays—the gentlemen were evidently keen smokers. The three were of very dissimilar appearance and of different social classes. One of them sitting by the table was in N.C.O.'s uniform, a dark-haired, angular man, with a surly, uncivil expression, and there seemed to be

little love lost between him and the two others, who were seated at two sides of a double desk. I was not sorry when after a short time this man was called away. The elder of the two others was probably a workman, but of a higher, educated class, member of a trade union committee. He was better dressed than most of his comrades, and a man of few words, but not out of any hostility. The younger man was just the opposite, decidedly loquacious, and it was clear at once that he was not a leader in a position to negotiate; however, he was only the person in any authority whom I could consult with any prospect of getting information. In less heroic times he may have been a commercial traveller, or a salesman in a department store, and I had the impression that he also stages the productions in some amateur theatrical society, writes the prologue, himself plays the "first lover," and makes excellent speeches at supper after the performance. A smart young man, and yet not the comic figure this description might suggest.

"Are you staying long with us?" I asked.

He replied with a friendly smile:

"But you surely know what is the situation in Berlin, and how things stand?"

No, I knew absolutely nothing; I had not been able to find out on my strolls between this building and the Royal Mews.

"We have all the important strategic points in our hands," he said. "All the railway stations have been occupied, and most of the public buildings; to-morrow morning Liebknecht will take over the government; resistance would be useless."

He said all this with modesty, but in an unmistakable tone of triumph—the tone of a man confident in his cause and thus with no reason for any tasteless crowing over the defeated adversary.

"And of course the Liebknecht Government is going to last. Well, are you going to settle here for all eternity and throw us out?"

"No," he said soothingly, and as if it was for him to decide, "when the Liebknecht Government has been formed you will be able to bring out your paper again—of course with a different policy, the Liebknecht policy, obviously."

"You are not very likely to live to see that, though I wish you long life—really, you have got the wrong end of the stick there."

He laughed with a good-natured superiority, and of course incredulously. The conversation continued for some time with such pleasantries, and I learned a little more about the alleged complete conquest of Berlin. I learned also that the *Vorwärts* building had been occupied as well as ours. Our building is a splendid "strategic point": the whole neighbourhood as far as Dönhoffplatz can be swept from it by machine-guns. To be a strategic point is very fine, but has its disadvantages.

I asked for permission to have a little look at the other rooms in the building, and permission was given at once and with the utmost courtesy. Even the dumb trade union official conveyed his assent by a friendly nod.

"You don't mind," I asked, "if I take a few papers with me—of no possible interest to you?"

This request too, which I only made in order to avoid any difficulty on leaving, was readily granted, and I took my leave, very pleased with the faultless observance of social forms here. In the rooms I inspected I found everything in perfect order; there were no traces of any billeting, the men were simply waiting in the courtyard below; in the upper storeys I found the bookkeepers' desks and the typists' machines, with their covers on, all in due order. Finally I went to my own room, opened a few letters that had arrived in the morning, stuffed everything loose into the drawers of the desk and the cupboards, and finally picked out anything I did not want to leave to the alien conquerors and packed it all into a substantial parcel.

In one of the cupboards there was another parcel containing nothing literary or political, but simply a couple of pounds of sugar. Sugar had become a rarity, and this had been sold to me a little time before by, let us say, an unofficial dealer. To leave this trophy behind in return for my courteous reception would have been a renunciation of justifiable egoism and a piece of tactlessness into the bargain. I took a parcel under each arm and descended, with an unspoken "*Auf Wiedersehen*," past the composing room into the courtyard.

Here, however, there came a complication with the men down below. Not over the things I was smuggling out, but because they imagined that I had been negotiating with the leaders about the surrender of the building and the reappearance of the paper—that we had betrayed them. I had been too long in the leaders' room, and a thoroughly bad impression had been made on the army freezing in the night air outside. A crowd of excited and indignant men blocked the exit and seemed determined to prevent me from leaving. There was a wild brandishing of some of the rifles, without the least intention of putting them to any dangerous use, and there were shouts that the paper was not going to appear, that it would not be allowed, that the men upstairs had nothing to do with it, and so on.

Standing two or three steps up, I tried to satisfy the doubters, telling them that there had been no discussion and nothing agreed, and that in any case it was not so easy as all that to start work again: there were all sorts of technical difficulties. An organizer came forward and said:

"Have a bit of sense—let him pass!"

He pulled a man out of one of the groups, a man with a rifle slung from his shoulder, and pushed him over to me. This man escorted me out of the occupied zone. The excitement subsided as we went off, and in front of us, in the street and the wide closed area around it, was a still and soundless night that revealed no sign of anything dramatic beneath its dark mantle.

My escort was a shabby little man in a threadbare jacket too short for him; he had buttoned it close up because he was cold. His beard had a moth-eaten look; he evidently had not shaved for some time. His sharp nose sadly pointed earthwards. He hung his head as though it were too heavy a burden for his weak and skinny neck, but probably he was simply too dog-tired to hold it up. He was terribly tired, and on top of that had very likely had even less to eat than usual on this eventful day. He hardly lifted his feet as he shuffled mechanically along at my side through Jerusalemstrasse and into Dönhoffplatz. A soft hat, years old and worn by the rain and the blows of fate, a hat which an old-clothes dealer would scarcely have taken as a gift, was pulled over his already greying hair. The rifle hung loosely on his

emaciated back, and it must have pressed uncomfortably on his projecting bones.

I took the little man for a worker at some handicraft that had long ceased to bring in much. If any thoughts filled his mind, his silent brooding would certainly have nothing to do with politics or constitutional reform or economic and social problems. He would be more likely to be bothered over the question whether enough food would be handed round in the building they had seized, and aggrieved at being picked out, he of all men, when he was so tired, to escort me through the cold night. By now, however, we had reached the Dönhoffplatz; my escort gave me to understand with a weary wave of his arm that I was now free and must find my way for myself, and himself turned back, dreamily hoping, no doubt, that there might still be a cup of coffee to be had, and some resting-place provided where he could lie down for the night.

The Spartacists had won only a few unimportant points, and on the following morning were still not masters of Berlin. During the night the masses who had remained loyal to the Majority Socialists were given the alarm, and in the morning they marched out of the factories and came from every quarter in endless processions to the Wilhelmstrasse, blocking access to it from all the neighbouring streets by their own numbers, and surrounding the Chancellor's palace on all sides. Our compositors and machine men, and the technical and commercial staffs, were greatly annoyed at being turned out of their workplace, and collected together in the Dönhoffplatz; in a restaurant close by we contrived some placards bravely demanding "Liberty of the Press!" and at the head of our battalion we marched to our common objective. In the Wilhelmstrasse officials of the trade unions squeezed in among the crowd and summoned the ex-combatants to the Vossstrasse, where they were handed rifles.

I went to the Chancellor's palace. Scheidemann, perspiring in spite of the winter cold, was standing at an open window, already hoarse with the exertions of a fiery address to the crowd. I found Ebert, calm or at all events without any visible signs of nervousness. Noske was driving to and fro in the city, collecting auxiliaries, and already exhibiting the extraordinary lack of knowledge of human nature, and of foresight, with which he was later to make possible the Kapp *putsch* and to deliver the Republic into the hands of its enemies. It was, indeed, not the White Guards who saved the Republic at this moment. That was done by the workers, whose massed assembly prevented the perplexed and irresolute Liebknecht from occupying the governmental quarter.

There was, nevertheless, a week's fighting over our splendid "strategic point." In the *Tageblatt* building the ringleaders with whom I had talked were very soon replaced by a personality of greater weight. Machine-guns were placed at the windows, and protected by piled books from the library. Troops loyal to the Government fired from the roofs of the opposite houses and from the tower of the Jerusalem Church. The walls of the building were splashed all over with bullet-marks. Crowds that had learned to appreciate fine points of strategy during the years of war watched the course of the struggle from a safe distance. Leaders of partisan bands formed from unemployed ex-soldiers offered to storm the building, almost always in return for a stipulated fee. The most serious offer came from the "Reichstag regiment"; its commander, a banker's son, was also the only one among these leaders of mercenaries who was not merely out to do business; he asked only that his men should be rewarded. Another leader, a strapping fellow in officer's uniform, with a row of revolvers and hand grenades round

his waist, was merely an ex-sergeant major, but he was unexcelled at braggadocio. The strategic problem offered no field for such talents as he boasted.

Then General von Lüttwitz's brigade marched into Berlin, bombarded the *Vorwärts* building with heavy guns, pulled out its garrison of Spartacists, took them to a neighbouring courtyard, and there shot the whole of them, old men and boys with the rest, with senseless brutality. The defenders of our building were given a military ultimatum, expiring at midnight. I had been negotiating with the garrison for some days through women intermediaries. If they voluntarily abandoned their fortress I would help those who brought about that result to escape; I had secured permission for this. We were anxious to prevent our machinery from being bombarded, and a couple of thousand of men thus put out of work. These were trying hours; we knew that there were wild men in the building who were intent on showing fight. But shortly before midnight the defenders all got away, over the roofs or by other means.

At once the commanders of the volunteer parties began to report to me, one after another, that they had just stormed the building, and the pompous officer who was really only a sergeant major insisted on dragging me from home next morning to lead me into the realm his heroism and his men's irrepressible dash had reconquered for me. He turned up early in the morning with half a dozen of these ironsides, in an armoured car they had borrowed from somewhere, warriors every inch of them, and the "liberators" won admiration and refreshment and reward all along the street. I had, willy-nilly, to drive through the city with them, and none of the spectators dreamed that it was a mere carnival procession.



The recaptured building was in a dreadful condition inside. Many cupboards had been broken open, books torn to pieces lay about everywhere, the floor was littered with rubbish, there was endless dirt and a horrible stench. Masses of documents lay on the tables, and the writing on some of the papers showed that the occupying force had included a Russian element. But most of these documents were draft love-letters and sketches and verses—material for a whole collection of *erotica*.

This German Revolution had two special characteristics. Considering the times, it was more or less intelligible that in England, when Charles I was led to the scaffold, the king's adherents maintained a horrified silence, and that in France only the Swiss made a heroic stand on behalf of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. But the Hohenzollern monarchy rested on so many apparently indestructible pillars, and not only on the vast organization but on the far-famed loyalty incessantly celebrated in songs, speeches, and schoolbooks. And now the appointed guardians of this monarchy, its proud paladins and its parasites alike, scattered and disappeared, without a blow, into a safe seclusion. Yet this revolution—and this was its other unique feature—was so well-behaved, so good-natured, to a degree only to be found in a few figures in some of the old English novels. It might have inscribed its banners with the slogan: "Love your enemies more than yourselves!" It was not pretty to tear off the badges of officers who refused to do it for themselves, but at least there was no ill-treatment—perhaps because there was not sufficient resistance. No one was kidnapped, imprisoned, beaten, or murdered, on account of his political opinions, and those men who were stood against the wall and shot were only poor proletarian youngsters, mowed down by

White Guards. A respectable and simple class of men marched in, without any instinct of cruelty, any desire for vengeance, with the inborn respect for freedom and for the lives of others that protects civilized men from the misuse of their own freedom. No one had sadist lusts, or replied with a shrug of contempt when human rights and human dignity were mentioned.

This Revolution had its idealist officer with the bushy eyebrows and the childlike purity of heart; and its fine sailors with their boyish delight in the great event—which ended in a courtyard with shots fired with perfect aim by a military squad. Of course there were various other figures, cranks or adventurers. But they were merely incidental, and even where they played a leading part it cannot be said that they were the most characteristic element. In the composite picture they yield place to another type—the small man, tired and hungry, with the jacket too short for him and the rifle slung from a strap that dug into his shoulder, who was my escort that night—the unassuming, down-trodden, disappointed or cheated man of the rank and file, cannon fodder for the nation's wars and the national industries, patient beast of burden for every expedition, eternal victim, *poire*, as the French call him, and dupe of all history, promised everything for the morrow and denied everything in his own day. Earlier revolutions had borne the stamp of a Mirabeau or Danton or Cromwell. The character of the upheaval which fifteen years later made an end of the Republic is conveyed by the names of other men, without whom that upheaval would never have come. The Revolution of November 1918 was the revolution of the unnamed man, and if a name must be given, it was the Dupe's Revolution.

## VI

### LUDENDORFF AT DARK

DURING the war the heads of the army publicity departments of some of the belligerent countries organized excursions to the fighting zone, to which Members of Parliament, journalists, and other persons not fit for active service, or retained in civil life as indispensable, were invited. Tours of the front were organized, just as there are tours of the museums and in Paris night tours of the dens supposed to be darkest. It is an innovation of some note introduced by modern war. The German war tourists had the advantage that they could visit not only the trenches but also conquered territories, and usually there was a reception for them at Headquarters. When they came home, they would modestly hint that the visit, of course to the extreme front, might have ended most tragically; if they did not actually say so one was led to suppose that a shell had burst almost under their noses.

I was never much in sympathy with the so-called *Schlachtenbummler*, the battlefield jaunters, who had their jaunt where the others fought and suffered and died; I always imagined the feelings with which the soldiers must regard these thrill collectors, toggled up for their war sport, who seemed to be saying to the fighters:

"What heroes you are! We wish we could stop here with you, but our train is leaving in half an hour, thank God."

So I left the free tickets for the battlefields to those who

enjoyed week-end parties of that sort, and I have never inspected a dug-out with a watch in my hand or listened to a lecture at Headquarters. It is only fair to add that it was soon made easy for me to renounce these pleasures, for, in compliance with Bethmann Hollweg's repeated urgent request, and also out of conviction, I wrote against the plans of annexation, against the unrestricted submarine warfare, against underestimating America, and against blind Jingoism; and since I had begun to do that no more invitations had reached me.

Thus I had no opportunity of meeting General Ludendorff during the four years of war. Occasionally I had some communication from him, but it would be a sign of his displeasure, a prohibition or a ban. I would go then to Bethmann, who, of course, more or less shared the responsibility for my sins, and tell him what had come; he would shrug his shoulders and say with a wry smile: "*The miles gloriosus*—what do you expect?" Ludendorff's personality, indeed, was developing in unexpected ways; it was everywhere, or at all events tried to be. Gradually his military self-assurance seemed to grow into a general lust for dominance, and it seemed evident that obscurer elements in his character were coming into conflict with the light of the intelligence.

For a time the popular love of naïve legend spread the tale that Hindenburg thought out the plan of the battle of Tannenberg in his spare time; then the know-alls asserted that a General Ludendorff, who was attached to the Field Marshal, had been the real engineer of the victory and deserved most of the credit. Later it was no longer Ludendorff but a third commander, General Hoffmann, and this corresponds fairly well with Hoffmann's own version in his

*Memoirs*; soon after the Revolution, during an evening stroll we had together in the Tiergarten, he was even a little more explicit about it. General Hoffmann was, no doubt, an exceptionally capable soldier—a big, heavily-built man, with the most varied and extensive experience of life, but not a man to be entirely depended on, something of a *condottiere*, with a rather un-Prussian independence and an ambition that led him, after the abrupt close of his regular career, into the wildest of schemes. At one moment he saw himself as the people's general, as dictator of the Republic, at another he wanted to capture Moscow and make an end of Bolshevism. Neither Hoffmann, who died prematurely, nor General Ludendorff, who was out to indulge his own superstitions and to tolerate nobody else's, was granted the great prize in the gamble for political eminence. The nation, like Cæsar, regarded the men who think too much as dangerous, and it longed for an unadventurous spirit whose very lack of ambition would inspire confidence, and for the faithfulness hymned in the greatest German sagas.

General Ludendorff has been laughed at a good deal for going so far as Sweden to escape from a revolution that scarcely deserved the name, and in blue spectacles at that, lest some pursuer should recognize him. There were others who were no less concerned for their safety. Count Westarp, the Conservative leader, for instance, came in great anxiety to Ebert, and begged him in distinctly subdued tones for protection and helpful documents, which the astonished People's Commissar readily gave, with a few reassuring words. It was certainly possible for Ludendorff's critics to point out that in this revolution not the slightest attempt had been made on the lives or the liberty of persons who represented the fallen régime. But we really have no right to



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reproach the General for seeking safety during those disturbed times, and I have never felt that the wit expended on him was in good taste. A general who is afraid of arrest or of being attacked at a street corner will often show the most heroic qualities in his military career. Ludendorff himself did so at Liège. It is no legend. He did a thing that was no part of his duties: galloped ahead with drawn sword and was the first, with a small following, to enter one of the forts. Napoleon was cold-blooded in battle. But after his abdication he took fright, disguised himself in the borrowed uniform of an Austrian colonel and the cap and cloak of the Prussian and Russian Commissioners, and trembled at every sound.

One day an acquaintance who had been associated with Ludendorff during the war, and had kept in touch with him since, told me that the General was back from Sweden and would like to meet me. He wanted to explain himself. All sorts of people had been piling the responsibility for their own misdeeds on his shoulders and making him a scapegoat, and he was anxious to have the truth placed on record. There was no reason why I should avoid a meeting; on the contrary, there was every reason to welcome the invitation, for I had no sympathy at all with the shabby practice of making scapegoats out of particular men or classes of men. The old censorship had been a logical development of the soldier's mentality, and had left no bitterness in retrospect, and Plato himself, though he refused to go to the tyrant, would not have refused to visit a tyrant dethroned. It was agreed that Ludendorff and I should have supper with the gentleman who was arranging the meeting. Our wives were also invited, and Ludendorff's aide-de-camp and his wife. We should thus be eight at table.



I was prepared for the usual disappointment, at all events at first sight. Whether one is inclined to see a demigod in every army commander who has won fame, or, like Tolstoy and Paul Louis Courier and others, to regard military genius as a pure imposition, a general is rarely very impressive in private life and in civilian clothing. I remember meeting the Spanish General Weyler, who had the reputation in Cuba of being a cruel monster, a bloodthirsty horror, and had furnished the Americans with plenty of pretexts for their declaration of war. I called at his flat in Madrid after his return from defeat; he came shuffling toward me in embroidered slippers, and at the sight of him I felt an incredulity, almost a sense of protest against the stories about his atrocities. And one may imagine what Napoleon would have looked like in a "bowler" instead of the *petit chapeau*. But this time there was no disappointment, or, rather, only the pleasant disappointment when Whitsun comes without the prophesied rain.

Our host and his wife had come in from their country house, and entertained their guests in the pretty little flat, near the Gedächtniskirche, which they used when they came to Berlin. It was a flat on the street level, entered by a side door, and as it had an air almost of concealment it seemed particularly suitable for this occasion, in harmony with the spirit of the rendezvous.

The newspaper pictures made General Ludendorff look older and also more heavily-built than he seemed to us when he came into the drawing-room of the catacomb residence, with the very charming and very well-dressed woman who was then his wife, and with his aide-de-camp and his wife. Later, during his short period in the Reichstag, his figure had greatly changed, but at this time he was surprisingly

youthful, slender and elegant, in an excellently fitting dinner jacket, and only the characteristic stiffness of his bearing betrayed the retired officer. Yet there was something about him which, in the poet's phrase, discouraged intimacy. It was not simply dignity and distinction, and it was not only the fact that he was weighed down by the troubles of the moment.

The talk at table was confined at first to matters of no great importance, or to the regrettable confusion of the bad times through which we were passing. Not unnaturally there was a general tension and suspense in anticipation of the coming discussion, but we were helped over it in some degree by our occupation with eating and drinking, much as the ceremonial song in the school hall drowns the nervous beating of hearts before the announcement of examination results, promotions and failures.

A few days before our meeting there had been a demonstration of ex-officers, an affair that looked very much like a reactionary plot, and Ludendorff's name had been mentioned in connexion with it. He began to talk of this incident, saying that there was no present possibility at all of a reaction, and that the affair had been stupidly exaggerated. He himself made no secret of his views, he was a monarchist, and the day might perhaps come when it would be possible to work once more for that idea; but at the moment nobody would think of it. I replied that any such plans were indeed hopeless at the moment. A great deal of tact ought to be shown at present on both sides, among the people on the Left and also among the ex-officers. This was not altogether easy during a period of unrest, but we were on the eve of the peace negotiations, and it would do no service to the country to foster new dissensions. Ludendorff went on

talking about the matter for a while: he considered that there would be a new Bolshevik and Spartacist attempt in the summer. What was urgently needed was an army without soldiers' councils, and with discipline.

Gradually the conversation came into the desired channel, though then it ceased for a while to be a conversation and became a monologue: General Ludendorff stated his case to a silent circle of listeners. It was a fluent statement, made with great adroitness and with equally great bitterness. It ran just a little too smoothly, too forensically and with too obvious an endeavour to sail past awkward facts. There was not a trace of the bluff warrior, not a vestige of swash-buckling: it was the apologia of a brilliant officer, perfectly trained, with no small talent for dialectics, which may be defined as the art of proving anything and everything. But he was not conscious of his dialectical evasions of the truth. He was full of the sense of his own rightness and of the wrong done to him, and everything he said was impregnated with a deep and passionate resentment which only his good breeding kept within bounds. In spite of the outward calmness which he forced himself to assume in respect for the conventions—a calmness that had something in it of rancour frozen hard—it was obvious that his resentment was consuming him without intermission, was raging within him and had become his dominant feeling. He was, needless to say, oppressed by the tragic fate of all Germany, but that was merely the background: in front, right in front of the footlights, there was being played the tragedy of the misjudged General Ludendorff, faithlessly rewarded by high and low alike with flagrant ingratitude. His spirit mourned for the woes of Germany and of Ludendorff.

"I am charged," he said in this tone of enraged self-

defence, "with interfering in politics. I never interfered in politics. During the war I did only what I considered to be necessary in the interest of the conduct of the war. It is possible, of course, for views to differ on that subject. But in war the political element cannot be separated from the military element. I always acted loyally: anyone who says the contrary is saying what is not true. But could I look on idly while the Government remained inactive and came to no decision? When I saw that nothing was being done, I naturally hit out sometimes, and with energy—I do not deny it.

"I am held responsible for the setting up of the kingdom of Poland. That is simply a lie, I had not the slightest responsibility for it. Bethmann and Czernin came to that decision between them. Of course they had been discussing it for a long time, for it took those two a good time to come to a decision about anything. Then, when the kingdom of Poland had come into existence, I said I wanted to have some Polish soldiers, we could make use of the addition to our strength. The situation was none too easy at that time, the Roumanians were just about to strike. But I only said so after the decision had already been taken in regard to Poland.

"The unrestricted U-boat war is being attributed entirely to our initiative: the story is that the High Command insisted on it and Bethmann was unable to resist its pressure. The truth is that after the event Herr von Bethmann took refuge behind the High Command and laid the blame on its shoulders—very convenient for him.

"I should not have been ready to continue the war in order to gain possession of the coast of Flanders, nor for the sake of the mineral basin of Longwy, important though that

was for German industry. But it is quite true that in view of the way the war had developed, with all the new technical inventions and improvements, I considered that we could not allow our industrial regions to be unprotected, and that we were compelled to take this into consideration in our peace conditions. We happen to have the misfortune that our most important industrial area lies close to the frontier. As a soldier I had to ask myself whether I would accept the responsibility for leaving the enemy in a position to invade these territories at a moment's notice in any new war. For that reason, it is quite true, I considered that guarantees must be taken in Belgium, Liège and so on—alongside that it was possible to have an economic agreement. But I declared that I should not make this a *conditio sine qua non*, and that if we could get a good peace or anything approaching a good peace I should not have continued the war for the sake of these aims. But no practical solution was ever put before me. All the time the talk was simply general, of peace and understanding. I could not waste time over mere theories—that did not appeal to me.

“Some people have called me a ‘gambler of genius,’ and charged me with taking insufficient precautions. I protest against that. If anybody says any such thing, it is an impudent untruth. I have no wish to push myself forward, but in the book I mean to write I shall speak out, and then you’ll see. It seems to me I have been silent long enough.”

Naturally this does not for a moment set out to be a full report of what he said—far from it, for he spoke at much greater length on each particular charge. The few sentences extracted from his speech-for-the-defence give only a very inadequate idea of his argument, which he developed with vehemence but also with no little forensic talent.

A great deal could have been said in reply; there was no difficulty about that, as the facts were generally known, and when he paused, as if to see what effect his speech had had, I took the opportunity to say why I was not convinced on this and the other point. He was visibly taken aback by this opposition, and showed his annoyance in his reply; and the temperature of this festal occasion, which had never reached any very appreciable warmth, cooled off yet further. As a layman I made, of course, no attempt to touch on strategic or purely military questions, and so there was no mention of the disaster of the western offensive, the mistake about Foch's reserves, which had been reported as annihilated but in reality were concealed in the wood of Villers-Cotterets; the lack of information about the break-up of the Bulgarian army, and the like. There was no more than a gentle hint of criticism in my remark that certain mistakes had been chalked up against Ludendorff's colleagues and that at times the organization seems to have failed to this extent, perhaps because it was too much concerned with the supervision of German public opinion. He seemed to understand what I was getting at, for he replied that his colleagues had been admirable, only the Intelligence Service had, perhaps, not been equal to all the demands made upon it. Then he turned away from the subject, spoke of the officers in general, rightly praised the officers on the active list who came first to the front, and admitted that among the later reinforcements there had been less efficient elements—it was not so easy to learn how to handle men, and there had been a good many shortcomings.

While he was busied with his defence and accusations one had the opportunity to consider whether there was perhaps some element of greatness in him—greatness in intensity

of feeling at all events, if not in genius. Perhaps it was not greatness, but at all events bigness. Professors of mathematics tell us that without their science there can be no philosophy, no logical thought, and that nobody can climb to the intellectual summits who has not worked out the most difficult equations. But it is possible to be an eminent mathematician and still no Kant.

After this battle act, the principal item in the evening's programme, had been concluded, we all stopped on until after midnight. It was not exactly a merry party, but disharmonies seemed to fade away amid the smoke of the cigarettes. At the moment when we were taking leave of one another at the front door I noticed that Frau Ludendorff, while her husband was still standing in the hall, went out into the ill-lit street and looked sharply in every direction. Noticing that the little manoeuvre had not escaped my attention, she said, half apologetically:

"It would be terrible if anything happened to him, would it not?"

There was soon to come an extraordinary change in this most brilliant representative of the General Staff school—that school in which everything was determined with infinite precision to the last detail, and the strong sense of order and exactitude permitted no deviation from instructions. But there was nothing that evening to suggest that the general was soon to be exploring the queer paths of an intellectual labyrinth. There was nothing to lead us to suppose that this specialist in military mathematics would be expending his powers in mystical speculations, and set himself to prove that twice two makes five. Those officers who were unable to make terms with the new order, or who refused to do so, occupied themselves with plans and enter-

prises that reached far above the heads of the bleating flocks who nosed about for their meagre fodder; they set out on adventures, some in the world around them and some in the airy regions of speculative ideas. And as the rampart with which the military caste had surrounded itself stood in the way of any day-to-day contact with the life of the average citizen, with economic needs and social inter-relationships, the flight of thought was not hampered by any excessive consideration for realities. In many cases, though, of course, not by any means in most cases, there was a certain resemblance to the mentality of the monastic recluse, whose imagination is liable to demand a great deal once it has broken through the strict rules and vaulted over the monastery wall. General Ludendorff, like Faust, gave himself up to magic. His researches ranged over the magic of the Teuton mysteries, the magic of the superior race, the magic of blood, the magic of gold, and pretty well all of the enchanter's lore of ancient and mediæval times that has been preserved down to the enlightened present. He became a priest at the sacrificial altars of Odin, and a ringleader in the anti-Semitic Witches' Sabbath. He rejected the pale and unsatisfying faith of the Christians, and annihilated Jesuits, Jews and Freemasons with a single blow of his club. When he married again after his divorce from his first wife, he acquired in his chosen spouse an expert in all these mysteries, a well-trying assistant, an enthusiastic adept and unrelenting champion of Valhalla; and with her there came various curiosities to add to the grotesque contents of his house. Those who made fun over the fact that General Ludendorff took the alchemist Tausend into his service and threw away money on him, failed to realize how well the crucible fitted into the picture, and missed an artistic touch.



Ludendorff offers rich material to any future imaginative writer in search of a subject among the figures of the present time. He makes a strong and effective stage character, by reason of the wealth and variety of his own traits. Coriolanus found his Shakespeare, Wallenstein his Schiller. Coriolanus had not Ludendorff's mysticism, Wallenstein had not his passionateness. There were times, also, when General Ludendorff came back from the world of fancy to common sense. This would happen when he was concerned with the duties of his old profession, with the discussion of military matters, and when he set out to show brainless disciples what the war they seemed in their loud-mouthed folly to be after would really be like. His authority then asserted itself; he exposed the ignorance of his followers with icy reproof and knocked a sense of realities into them. The snarling poodle of occultism then remained ignored on the doorstep, and the laboratory with its phials and retorts and boilers and its thick folios turned once more into a general staff office.


Alike amid the clear light of critical thought and amid the vapours of his fantasy-brewhouse, General Ludendorff, ever since he had felt so acutely in his own person the venality and vacillation of his fellow-men, had constantly preserved the austere pride, the rather attractive arrogance of a lonely man. In this he was in no way behind any Roman commander cast out by Senate and people. On the occasions when for short periods he associated with others, he still remained aloof, an isolated individual whose voice reached only a tiny community. He had fluency as a speaker, but not the rhetoric whose rhythm works up twenty or thirty thousand hearers to delirium. Even his hatred had bigness; his brain was not filled with pictures of persecutions and

penalties. What interested him was the blow on a grand scale, the smashing offensive, and he would have had no inclination for the systematic petty labours of Fouquier-Tinville, the Revolutionary public prosecutor. Even his semi-education did not betray him into banality. There are people with a gift of effective pompousness that can make Mount Everest itself look small.

Not until he had begun to bury himself in earnest in his mystical researches did he light upon the idea that the Jews were a race to whom their Jehovah and their Talmud had given the mission of the destruction of the Germanic race. Then, under proper guidance, the scales fell from his eyes, and he realized that the war had not been lost through the superior strength of the enemy, not through American intervention, not through the despised tanks, not through errors of strategy, not through the mistakes in the western offensive, not because of the emergence, at the wood of Villers-Cotterets, of the French army which had been supposed to be dead, but simply and purely through the commands of the Talmud; and he realized at the same time that he himself had been stabbed in the back by an Old Testament conspiracy. On that evening in our mutual acquaintance's flat all this was not yet clear to the General, and consequently his long defence, in which nothing was forgotten, contained no mention either of a stab in the back or of a race question. The accused at that time were the weak Bethmann, the Berlin Governments, his own friends and colleagues who had left him in the lurch, and all those who had sacrificed him in order to conceal their own responsibility, even reaping recognition and honours at his expense.

There is still one detail lacking in the report of that evening, and it may as well be mentioned for the sake of

completeness, although it is a very small matter. Our host, who is now dead, owed his personal acquaintance with General Ludendorff to the circumstance that in August 1914 he was enrolled in the Automobile Corps and sent to East Prussia. He was a very competent motorist, and when Hindenburg took over the command in East Prussia, accompanied by Ludendorff, our host of this evening was assigned with his car to the two generals. His superiors noted that he was absolutely reliable, not only as chauffeur but in other ways, and their confidence in him led to his being occasionally selected for various tasks calling for discretion. He drove the Commander-in-Chief's car at Tannenberg. He never boasted of these war experiences, as many others would have done, or of his connexions in high places; he never spoke a word about them. He always preserved a reticence entirely in consonance with his natural quiet modesty; he did not win the battle of Tannenberg. Everybody knew, the commanders equally well with the officers' servants, that he and his family were not among those to whom racial research accords the certificate of Aryanism. There was no need even to investigate old family papers and turn back to past generations.



## VII

### THE JEW BALLIN

ALBERT BALLIN could not hide the fact—he did not for one moment want to hide it—that he was a Jew, and it was impossible for anyone else to fail to observe it. His facial type, and striking details like the strong lips under his moustache, sufficiently revealed it. By the time he had reached the fifties his broad forehead was lined, the crown of his head was bald, and his dark hair had grey patches, especially above the temples. His nose, not with the crook of the popular caricature of a Jew, was strong and rather fleshy, his chin round and full. The observer's attention was attracted at once by the shrewd and lively eyes behind his pince-nez, those truly "speaking" eyes, which from moment to moment expressed everything, grave thought and humour, dominant will and kind-heartedness, anxiety and contentment. As with all fine natures, one felt behind each of these transient pictures a wealth of the spirit; and even when Ballin seemed to be in care-free enjoyment of the pleasures of society one was still, to borrow a simile from his field of activity, reminded of a gaily "dressed" ship passing on her way—heavily laden.

But when one tries to etch a human face with words the true features never emerge; the lines do not blend into the real likeness of the man. Only the standard Hollywood beauty's face is relatively easy to envisage, and if we can give an idea of our subject by saying that he is like Cæsar

or Napoleon or Dante, or some other historic bust copied a thousand times, it is a most welcome aid in our search for an image.

Seafarers' physiognomies are generally simple and open, like the heads in old woodcuts or in the Minnesinger codex. Ballin's features, formed and lit up by his intelligence, were not cut to these primitive patterns, but he had the seaman's complexion, bronzed by the air of port and open sea. The features that could be described as Jewish had been overlaid by this patina. One could see at once that he was used to facing the ocean winds, and was not one of those town-dwellers who come back from a short holiday cruise to boast a transitory colour. He was most at home on board one of his "Hapag" ships, and on sea voyages he was able to do without the sleeping draughts to which at other times he was too much addicted. A little imaginative research into his possible ancestry might well have traced it back, jumping a few thousand years, to Zebulun, the son of Jacob, who, in the words of his father's blessing, "shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships"—and of whose craving for the sea Thomas Mann tells rather more fully in the second volume of his *Joseph*. When Ballin was in yachting clothes and wearing the cap of the Imperial Yacht Club, these garments seemed natural to him and in no way incongruous, and he wore them with the careless elegance that can come only from habit. The bank directors or high officials who went to a launch or for Kiel Week, were liable to look as amateurish in their nautical rig as suburban huntsmen in their shooting jackets on a Sunday, or North Germans in leather shorts spending a holiday in Bavaria.

Ballin was rooted in Hamburg, where he was born—rooted as firmly and deeply as roots can hold. He was no immigrant

into the town. Nor had he grown up in some part of it, or among some business community, that could have existed just as well anywhere else, far from ports and the open sea. His ancestors came to Hamburg from North Germany or Denmark in the seventeenth century; some of the family are said to have lived and worked as craftsmen in Paris. Albert Ballin's father had traded under the name of Morris and Co. as an emigration agent, providing temporary quarters for emigrants and shipping them across to America, and his office and residence were under one roof in a building in the Steinhöft, in one of the picturesque old quarters by the port, whose romance disappeared bit by bit in the process of modernization of later times.

Albert Ballin was twenty years old when he took over the control of the business on the death of his father. He had shown little talent at school; he was one of the many whose qualities only begin to show themselves when their whole destiny no longer seems to depend on knowing the date of the battle of Cannæ. Morris & Co. had not been doing well, but the young man soon put new life into the business. The shipping firm of Edward Carr concluded an arrangement with his firm, and made him its general agent. His initiative was amazing. He had the insight of genius into neglected opportunities of world transport and the way to take advantage of them. He carried through amalgamations with other shipping firms, until the concern became such a power in the shipping world that the conservative lords of the "Packetfahrt"—as the Hamburg-America Line (Hamburg-Amerika-Packetfahrt-Aktien-Gesellschaft) was called for short—found it advisable to incorporate this powerful competitor in their own organization, and to make the redoubtable Jewish conqueror their Passage Manager, head of the

whole of their passenger business. Two years later he was made a member of the board of directors.

These were the first steps in Ballin's rise in Hamburg. He was every inch a Hamburger in character, and also in not a few externals, little though he resembled the portraits in the old patrician houses. His speech had the Hamburg accent and the Hamburg manner, separating the syllables neatly in a way that seems a little prim and affected to the inhabitants of other parts of Germany. He ate and drank and smoked in the Hamburg fashion, and that still meant in those days a readiness to undertake a good deal, and to enjoy anything without being finical over matters of hygiene.

But also, and above all, he had the pride of the Hamburger. Only in his case this pride was not, as in so many other cases, the product of limitation and intellectual narrowness. Many scions of the old Hamburg families had nothing left in them of the traditions of the Free City. Their ideal was to belong to one of the feudal students' corps, and such vestiges as they still retained of Hanseatic sturdiness were to be found only in their jealous distaste for parvenu Berlin with all its new ideas and excessive energy. Ballin himself had no great liking for the enormously overgrown capital of the Empire; he preferred the Hamburg style of living; he was more at home in it and found it more pleasant than the noisy restlessness of Berlin. But he had no prejudices to blinker his vision in observing the extraordinary energy, the inexhaustible vitality, the hard work and the achievements of Berlin, and he realized that in his native city there was a good deal of pettiness and too much of the local patriotism behind which a comfortable slackness takes refuge.

His pride began at the quayside. There, where he carried

on his own creative work, the port was being filled under his guidance or inspiration with a magnificent merchant fleet. Giant ships sailed and returned, plant was being extended, the shipyards were incessantly at work, sirens and the rattle of cables and all the sounds of busy labour filled the air; smoke poured from countless funnels, and cases and bales of goods were loaded for every part of the world, or lifted out of the ship's belly by a mighty crane and carried in its claws to the wharf. It is very possible that sometimes, when he looked at all this evidence of achievement, the pride of the Hamburger in him united with another pride, the pride of a Faust in his works. He could tell himself that it was he who had originated the vast activities displayed here in front of him; he had done an unforgettable work in producing this marvellous development—and he was no descendant of princely merchants or famous Hanseatic leaders, but merely the son of a Jewish family of no particular standing, living in the Steinhöft.

But there was not an atom of bombast in him, of hard or oily self-satisfaction. He was not filled, like many other and less eminent dignitaries of the German commercial world, with an inflated sense of his own importance. More remarkable and almost more admirable than the development of Hamburg shipping under his impulse was the development of his personality. "Morris & Co.'s Jew boy" had become the finest and freest and most cultivated man of the world—and not one of those who seem always to be saying: "See what a man of the world I am!" He had a perfect natural adroitness in dealing with people, an unconstrained elegance, an instinctive tact—the social forms of the real "cavalier," joined to the keenest intelligence and at the same time to warmth of heart and a winning and artistic lightness of



touch. I have seen him as host sitting at table next to William II. Ballin knew that everyone's eyes were on him, but this did not trouble him in the least in his calm and cheerful self-confidence. He did neither too little nor too much; he was just the master of the house, unconcernedly entertaining his exalted guest, smiling at the Kaiser's jokes, listening and replying without any extravagant indication of servile delight; it was, of course, not his first appearance in that position. Whatever his surroundings there was never a sign in his attitude of pose or calculation; he filled a far more important part than most of the people round him, but he never played his part in the stage sense. He was a "boss," his eyes were used to surveying the whole state of a ship and every part of a vast undertaking, alert, dominating, controlling, commanding. He was used to exercising the same critical control of the whole length of world-wide routes. But this sense of mastership put on no airs, and pervading it all was a captivating charm.

Probably the sovereign rulers and the big shareholders in the "Packetfahrt," those socially encapsuled and unapproachable Hamburg patricians, felt at first a secret discomfort when the new man came into their midst. In the Jewish milieu out of which he had come there were no family connexions or wealth of note, and he was unable to bring with him by way of recommendation, as could Max Warburg (who was like him in many respects and became his most intimate friend), a family name of admitted distinction. But his demeanour made everything easy and pleasant for them—probably to their surprise. They discovered also that, for all the magnificence with which he represented Hamburg shipping before the outer world, he was not exacting in his personal requirements, allowed the

Company to reap all the benefit of his immense industry, his creative ideas and his foresight, and attached less value to the accumulation of wealth than to the consciousness of having risen to this position of eminence through his own merit.

It quickly became evident what an impetus his energy was likely to give to the progress of the port and the Company and to Hamburg's oversea trade. Before long it became the obvious thing to invest him with the supreme management and the real power. He became indispensable as organizer of the whole shipping trade, as the pioneer who sent the Hamburg steamers into every sea; he was the ablest and shrewdest of counsellors. He became indispensable through his skill as a negotiator and his unfailing success, with the most difficult or complicated problems, in reaching the best solution. In London, in New York, in all the great centres of world communications, he sat or presided at the conference table, dealing with statesmen, with the heads of the old competing lines, with the great bankers, with the Morgans and other financial magnates; and in every discussion of pools and fusions and spheres of control he so increased the power of his own Company that not a few rivals who thought themselves in the position of privileged masters of sea routes found themselves left with nothing but the memory of their former greatness. He built gigantic passenger steamers, which far outdistanced every ship in the world in speed and comfort and so secured the custom of rich passengers from all Europe and America, India and the East. He made long tours of investigation, examined the business opportunities in the Far East, calculated the chances of branch lines penetrating into little-served areas, and covered the whole world with a shrewdly designed network of routes.

It should be borne in mind what the Hamburg "Packetfahrt" amounted to around 1885, before Ballin came on the scene. The unimpressive building in which it was then housed sufficed for the conduct of all its business; it had allowed Bremen to beat it, and was of far less importance and popularity than the Norddeutscher Lloyd; it possessed only one passenger steamer of any size, a more or less modern vessel but almost a failure; the ship bore the name *Hammonia*, but did it no great honour. One may learn best from Bernhard Huldermann's admirable book how Ballin made short work of these wretched conditions, and how from year to year, always through Ballin's energy, and without ever a halt in the triumphal march, the "Packetfahrt" changed and grew and covered the whole world. Huldermann was a loyal and admiring colleague, and in his book one may also read memoranda and reports of Ballin's which show how incomparably, down to the last detail, Ballin had mastered every question of freight and passenger business, of provisioning, of constructional technique, and of the ramifications of world communications; and his biographer was certainly justified in saying that there was no one in the world so familiar with the complicated problems of shipping pools, or so well able, with every detail of them at the beck and call of his memory, to elucidate them and disentangle them. Really, when those Hamburg magnates pocketed their family pride and sent for the young Jewish fellow, they did a good stroke of business. He bore no resemblance to the portraits in their long line of forefathers, but he had not the feeling of so many heirs that he was entitled to a comfortable existence, and whatever else might be thought of his blood it had not been attenuated and impoverished by caste interbreeding. It was certainly a very

strange experience to have to admit to themselves that this man, a man of his origin, had reawakened by his example the old bold Hanseatic spirit—adjusted, needless to say, to a new technique and a new economic world—and led it into campaigns of conquest on a grander scale than ever.

He surrounded the "Hapag" with an unprecedented magnificence on the social side. He did this in order to advertise the size and power of the Hapag; and also because it appealed to the artistic element in his character. Guests came from Berlin, from the Rhineland, from other parts of Germany, and from abroad, to the celebrations he arranged two or three times a year, as a regular thing or on some special occasion. His invitation to a trial trip on a newly built Hapag ship, to Kiel Week, to the sailing regatta on the Lower Elbe, or to a launching ceremony, was always received with the utmost of pleasure and instantly accepted. Nowhere was the food so good, nowhere was hospitality given so much as a matter of course and without any swagger or ostentation, nowhere was everything so brilliantly organized and thought out to the last detail. The guests appreciated this "Hamburg" hospitality, and sang its praises as though this talent for entertainment were universal in Hamburg. And they found a company such as was seldom assembled anywhere else in Germany. All the stars had hurried down from their skies to the deck of the hospitable ship, and usually there would shine in their centre a warm, cheerful, gracious radiance from the great Kaiserly constellation. Albert Ballin went unobtrusively from one group to another, brought together the people who wanted to meet each other, smilingly introduced one and another to the Kaiser, and as he went to and fro glanced about him keenly observing, supervising, and giving orders, to make sure that

nothing was lacking and that each one of the alert staff of attendants was doing the right thing. With the same keen glance that penetrated to the most distant parts of the world, he watched over the smallest detail of everything around him, the kitchen and the games, the menus and the boxes of cigarettes, the decorations and the lighting, the beds in the state cabins, and in the third class no less; he arranged and supervised his festivities with a minute care which itself was the product of an artistic pleasure in all that he did.

Nobody in that brilliant company gave any thought, or would have dreamed of doing so, to the fact that the host responsible not only for these kindnesses of the moment but for the imposing achievement underlying them, the host whom the Kaiser held in such high honour, was entered in the register of births as "Jewish" or "Hebrew." At that time there were, indeed, very many members of the upper classes who were indifferent to so-called racial questions, and stricter ideas were often allowed to be forgotten, especially in regard to the very rich Jews. But Ballin had really devoted friends among the people of importance or of high rank whom he gathered around him, while almost all the baptized and unbaptized *arrivés* had to content themselves with being able to count on the love or cupboard love of mere *Geheimräte*, and exhibiting a few parade figures in their showroom drawing-rooms. Bülow and Brockdorff-Rantzau were not the only ones who felt for Ballin something more than the superficial cordiality of which nothing is left after the first turn of fortune. Ballin's personal relations with prominent people, alike in Germany and abroad, were of importance to the Hapag, and also to all Hamburg, and were placed in their service. If there was anything to be arranged in Berlin, a conflict settled or something got out

of the officials, it was he who went there, and who, like the leading statesman of a country, took upon himself, quite as a matter of course, the more or less difficult mission.

He had been richly endowed, and had made the very best use of the endowment. Exceptional qualities were united in him, and he was able to apply them to great tasks, continually to heighten them in the application, and to make full and effective use of them. None of the cruelties of fate that condemn a genius to confinement in the gloom of some wretched quarter in which its development is arrested, so that it languishes and dies, obstructed his path. His intelligence, his energy, his personal charm attained everything that possibly could be attained, and even things that might well have been supposed to be beyond attainment. He was by no means the only self-made man in the Germany of his day, but no other rose so high out of circumstances so unpromising. Sometimes a man is loaded with decorations in preparation for tragedy, like the ram for the altar of sacrifice.

But Ballin was not surrounded exclusively by friendship and love. He was also regarded with suspicion and hostility, a suspicion and hostility that did not show themselves openly but moved about surreptitiously in felt slippers. Some of the men in the Foreign Ministry, for instance Secretary of State von Jagow, and feudal persons in high government positions, disliked him on account of his origin or objected to his influence. They were ready to make use of him in delicate matters, but if he had broken his neck over them they would have been very glad. Still more dangerous centres of latent ill-will were the salons of the Kaiserin. Augusta Victoria certainly knew better than to annoy her adored spouse, who so easily lost patience, by

complaining too much when he received the creator of the great German merchant fleet for long private talks, and she would sit opposite the favoured guest at the family table with the courteous dignity of the housewife, but that was simply due to the miracle-workings of wifely love, and of court training in self-discipline. One may imagine the ladies whispering together in the evening when the news went round that "he has come again." They would sit bending over their fancy work, crocheting politics as they worked, good royalist politics. For the most part, of course, this amounted to no more than an innocent game of "patience"; for their political crocheting found no practical use. The general atmosphere of unfriendliness to the guest was not due, or primarily due, to anti-Semitism, though, of course, this did exist; anti-Semitic feeling found only mild and incidental expression. The trouble was that Ballin was not merely a Jew but "Anglophil," and consequently—no doubt about it—an advocate of everything the English wanted, and this was still worse than the fairly obvious fact that none of his ancestors had lain on bearskins in the Teuton forests. In reality Ballin was simply anxious for an understanding with Great Britain, as were all observers of political affairs who could see reason and could look ahead; and he was always ready to take any opportunity of making use of his relations with British statesmen in the interest of Germany and of world peace. But—understanding with England! Why, said the priests and priestesses of the sacred flame, that meant subjection to British arrogance! The triumph of the nation of shopkeepers! Renunciation of the German navy's right to exist, of Germany's world mission, so splendidly conceived by His Majesty!

Augusta Victoria's instinctive dislike of this overweening,

unreliable, avaricious England was joined to a dislike perhaps even stronger for the English Court, for that royal family who manifestly regarded themselves as far above anybody else—to say nothing of the immoral Uncle Edward, who had gone so far as to make sarcastic remarks about his nephew. All those stuck-up ladies seemed entirely to have forgotten that they too had sprung from a petty German princely house; they put on airs as though they were at least great-grandnieces of Queen Elizabeth. William II, in two minds between admiration and jealousy, used to enjoy the Cowes Regattas, and his wife did not grudge him those diversions or his enjoyment of sport and of English country life, even if this did not entirely fit in with the picture of the German Emperor, by the Grace of God, that filled her soul. She did not even disapprove of his intercourse with Ballin, but she cast anxious glances at that friendship, and if her imperial consort was to be inveigled into an international outlook and his magnificent naval creation was to be interfered with, she would not shrink from fulfilling her duty of warning and resisting. It will be remembered how, after Haldane's visit to Berlin, she went to her husband and implored him to reject the naval compromise recommended by that weakling Bethmann, and to resist those people's devilish allurements. Tirpitz kissed her hand gratefully in the name of all patriots; he tells the affecting story in his Memoirs. On that occasion it had been Ballin who brought his co-religionist Sir Ernest Cassel to the Kaiser, and he and that Anglo-Jewish upstart, Uncle Edward's friend, had induced the unsuspecting William to receive the British War Minister; in his innocence he had been pleased and indeed delighted to meet Mr. Haldane. Had it not then been seen once more that these people, these men of different



flesh and blood, were alien to the true German type, to German idealism, and must be guarded against, even (for, of course, it went without saying that Herr Ballin was entirely well-meaning) when they were not spreading their toils with deliberate cunning?

The Empress Augusta Victoria, and with her probably not a few frowning Pan-Germans, regarded Ballin as one of those who, in their fear of British enmity, wanted to spoil the Kaiser's pet idea, the idea of naval power and the command of the seas, much as in the first half of the seventeenth century the "*Kipper und Wipper*" in Germany had fraudulently clipped and counterfeited the gold coin, until the currency began steadily to depreciate. But the Kaiserin and all the others who were afraid that Ballin might ensnare the Kaiser, to the undoing of the German navy, were certainly mistaken. Ballin should have been the very last to be suspected of readiness to sacrifice German interests for England's sake. British shipping had held front rank for centuries, and yet he had taken no account of its pretensions or susceptibilities when he challenged its predominance in every part of the world by creating the Hapag fleet. It is true that he regarded an understanding with Britain as of vital importance to Germany. He did not underrate British fighting power like so many irresponsible drivellers; he knew the country too well, and gave no heed to Bismarck's not very happy joke about "arresting" any British expeditionary force that attempted to land. He was also too well informed and too shrewd to be misled by the beautiful lines of the great armoured cruisers; in spite of his artistic sensitiveness he had a sound judgment of practical values. But, for all that, there was a difference between the feelings of the man whose whole life was lived by the sea,

and those of landsmen without his special knowledge and experience. Ballin's relations with the navy and with high naval authorities were of the most cordial, and were plainly influenced by a spiritual community produced by the life in the same salt air. He felt a sympathy with Tirpitz, although he was well aware that that Neptune's respectable beard was only a mask of apparent candour. More than once he said to me: "Tirpitz, after all, is the only man in all that lot."

There was another reason why the idea that Ballin was trying to influence the Kaiser to the detriment of the navy was absurd. He was certainly not one of those worshippers of "majesty" who unceasingly expressed admiring agreement in order to gain constant favour with the All-Highest, and who never ventured on an unwelcome remark. But he was well aware that a monarch so pampered with excess of incense could not stand the truth every day. It had to be administered in discreet doses and only on special occasions, and it would be a useless expenditure of energy and would merely bore the Kaiser if the truth were spoken, however bravely, in season and out of season. Marquis Posa himself would soon have lost all his influence if he had besieged King Philip with the same petitions at every audience, and what would freedom of thought, what would the Flemish provinces have then gained? Ballin was prepared, and was in a position, to take the risk of a big battle in the Palace, but he was not prepared and not in a position to undertake incessant fighting; and, after all, he and his exalted patron were never without less ticklish matters to talk about. He was sufficiently familiar, in any case, with court psychology to know that the lion must not be prodded with the end of a walking stick all the time.

I doubt whether he would have been suited for the work of a statesman in office, as many people thought he might be, and least of all for a ministerial post such as that of Foreign Secretary or Prussian Premier. As I have already mentioned, he had a brilliant talent for negotiation, and with this gift and his keen intelligence he was often pre-eminent in particular cases. But a great actor is not always a great theatrical manager or a great film director. It may be objected that in one of the greatest undertakings in the world Ballin showed his never-failing range of vision, his amazingly comprehensive grasp united with aliveness to the very smallest detail, his diplomatic adroitness, and, in short, so many qualities that the statesman should possess. But these qualities were brought into play in a field in which Ballin was at home and in which he moved freely and as unchallenged sovereign; there he had no feeling that enemies were lying in wait for him, and he enjoyed the vivifying stimulus of a familiar atmosphere. Probably in Berlin, between the bureaucracy and the parties and a hundred civil and military authorities, in the midst of lobby intrigues and political and personal incompatibilities and rivalries—in that atmosphere of the last years of the Wilhelminian epoch—he would quickly have lost his vitality and alertness and enterprise. Fortunately his race protected him against any risk of an offer. Bismarck had not been afraid to make Ministers out of Jews—Friedenthal, for instance—if they had been baptized; but Ballin had not been. Moreover, his commercial and political interests extended mainly to the great seabound trading countries, especially Great Britain and America; France, Italy, and the rest of Europe lay outside his normal concern. It is true that in this respect he would not have been very different from most of the states-

men of his time, who were ready to conduct even the foreign policy of their country without having the slightest acquaintance with people and things familiar to every commercial traveller going his rounds with his bag of samples.

As regards home political issues, Ballin would have been unlikely to be ready to deal with them, except on the economic side: he appreciated the necessity and urgency of drastic reforms, but avoided discussing them, making the rather lame excuse that he was not competent to give an opinion. In the disputes, often serious, with his workmen at the ports, he generally showed the normal capitalist outlook, though he was good-hearted towards any particular individual. If he is to be tested by the question what he would have done in July 1914, at the unhappy moment when the representatives of Vienna induced the Kaiser and Bethmann Hollweg to promise armed assistance, it may be said with tolerable certainty that he would have stood that test; he would not have been led astray by a deluded eagerness to oblige. His friend Bülow declared after the event that he himself would have held the Kaiser back from that disastrous decision, would never have given his assent to it; there is much more reason for the confident assumption that Ballin would have prevented it and saved the situation. For as a trader he came to no business decision without clearly taking account in advance of every possibility, every likelihood of gain and loss, and every risk, and adequately covering risks, and the danger in this transaction, with its unlimited liabilities so hastily accepted, could not possibly have escaped his shrewd intelligence.

His affections, or his feelings, had some part in his intimate relations with William II, and there was involved in them a sentimentality of the particular type that might be called

Jewish. Most of the "big Jews" who were invited for any reason to ~~a~~ *Bierabend*, an informal social evening, at the Palace, usually because money was wanted for museums or research, found no more than a satisfaction of their vanity in this honour; their feelings in regard to it were entirely self-centred, their interest only in what they could get out of it, exactly as in the case of the Teuton favourites, the *triarii* of Brandenburg, the great landowners of East Prussia, and the Rhenish captains of industry; but Ballin's nature was warmer and more sensitively responsive. He had a genuine gratitude: he was grateful to the Kaiser for distinguishing him above all others, for showing him even more than a gracious benevolence, for choosing him—him, the son of the simple emigration agent of the Steinhöft—to be his friend; and the gratitude had developed into love, into a process of rapidly growing worship. William II first met him in 1895, during the preparations for the opening of the Kiel Canal, and later he used to sign his letters to "Dear Ballin": "Your true friend, Wilhelm I.R." Ballin, in between his letters to his mother, used to send long reports to the Kaiser, from London, from the Far East, or from America. All this energy as a correspondent might seem to betray just a slight excess of courtly assiduity, but the injustice of any such suspicion is evident when we see how William II encouraged him, sent for him immediately he was back from these journeys, as if he had long been waiting for his return, and listened to his further account of them by word of mouth. Ballin made no attempt to take advantage of this imperial favour in the interest of his Hapag, and, as William II very often urged him to make concessions in negotiating with the Norddeutscher Lloyd, it might even be contended with some plausibility that the Hamburg company lost more

than it gained by this personal friendship. On the other hand, it was a friendship of which all the world knew, and, with the many visits to the Kaiser, it had effects which could not but be gratifying to the shareholders, for any growth in the prestige or popularity of the Hapag brought financial profit with it. For himself Ballin wanted none of the gifts a second-rate ambition will covet. The orders conferred on him he put away in his safe, and the name "Ballin" had no need of any decorative "handle." He had one title that the rest did not possess, and that could not be conferred on them in the New Year honours, a title that was his constant joy and satisfaction; it shone more brightly than the diamond-studded star of any order. He was "the Kaiser's friend," and what more could man desire?

Yet his love was not able to blind him, and he knew every aspect of the Kaiser's personality, better than the critics in the ante-rooms or outside the Palace gates. But he was like Shem and Japhet, who "went backward and covered the nakedness of their father" Noah, and not like the unfilial Ham. Some of the very men for whom William II had a "weakness" spurted their poison over him, like Harden, who sometimes visited the Kaiser; some, like Bülow, industriously mixed it and prepared it in secret. I think Ballin was in every case the defending counsel who even in the most desperate situation pleads "mitigating circumstances." He insisted that the chief responsibility for every mistake and for the unhappy general policy lay with the Kaiser's entourage, the men at the head of the Government, the official advisers, the Foreign Ministry. He had praise for any praiseworthy exception—Valentini, Head of the "Civil Cabinet," who was shelved during the war by noisier patriots, and Count Eulenburg, Marshal of the Court, though the Count

bolted and barred his fine intelligence the moment politics were mentioned, and quietly dropped out of the conversation. When the talk turned to the inevitable subject of William II, Ballin would express his sympathy for the "poor Kaiser," who was so badly served, was encouraged in his mistakes by all the flatterers round him, and was never allowed to hear an unpleasant truth. "The poor Kaiser"—I heard these three words from him to the very last. He would have been glad to protect the Kaiser, almost like a good "nanny." He was honestly concerned about him.

He was also, as I have already emphasized, not without courtierly discretion; he was careful not to create unpleasantness every time he entered the Kaiser's study, not to blurt out home truths with the daring permitted in the past, if it came to the worst, to the Court Jester. But if some great issue was at stake, for his friend the Kaiser or their country, and if no one else was ready to speak up, he considered that he had no right to shirk doing so. This was the most difficult way of giving proof of gratitude and devotion, but for the very reason that it was difficult he had to do it, and perhaps he was the only one who could. There was no one else to whom the Kaiser had given so much, and no one else had better reason to suppose that the warmth of affection in his words would thaw the iciest surface. In thinking so Ballin was not throwing modesty aside. But there was a trace of vanity in the feeling that he had to venture, that he even could, where even the most eminent advisers, princes and chancellors, feared to tread. In the most secret chambers of his soul, chambers which he himself perhaps did not search, it must have been gratifying to feel that at moments of crisis everybody said that only he could speak out to the Kaiser, and he must go to see him. But if so it was

a very innocent faith in his vocation, involving no danger to anyone but himself, and in any case less dangerous to the rest of humanity than the pretensions of other men who claimed to be the ordained of the Lord but could show no proof of their heaven-sent mission.

But the truth must out: Ballin exercised no influence whatever over the Kaiser in any important question or at any critical moment. Huldermann, his biographer, makes that definite statement. Ballin had a hand in preparing the way for the negotiations with Haldane, and that is all; and even in this case things did not turn out as he intended, and he fell into the situation of a peacemaker at whose departure all present say disdainfully that they have never had so hot a quarrel as when he came. His long talks with the Kaiser turned always on small matters; the big problems were never touched on unless merely academically and in ordinary conversation. At no serious crisis, neither during the Agadir affair nor during the Balkan wars, nor at the moment when assent was given to the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, did Ballin learn what was going on. Never at any such moment did William II ask his opinion, or admit him into his confidence with regard to what he proposed or had decided to do. For all his apparent intimacy, even at times his real intimacy with the Kaiser, he never surmounted the political wall round the sovereign. Their intercourse was regarded by William II as a private affair, though his pleasure in meeting so able a man and such a decent fellow was combined very usefully with the promotion of all sorts of national interests.

Ballin was treated in the same way as all the others who might have been consulted over questions of critical importance and were not consulted. William II considered it sufficient to discuss and decide with the Chancellor and an



Under Secretary, in the course of a stroll in his park, the question whether Germany should blindly follow the Austrians in their ultimatum policy, and even Bethmann Hollweg saw no necessity for bringing in other competent political advisers. In so doing, in listening to nobody but his Chancellor and entering on disastrous political courses in agreement with the Chancellor alone, the Kaiser was acting entirely in accordance with the Constitution. There was no sense in it, but it was perfectly "constitutional." Here we see the results of the most disastrous defect in the system Bismarck set up, a defect inseparable from the disguised or undisguised domination of a single will. No guarantees protected the German nation against the danger of sudden impulses on the monarch's part, and the monarch himself was not protected by the threadbare cloak delusively thrown over an autocratic system.

Ballin, whose commercial insight was so well able to recognize the possibilities of loss, had invested too much emotional capital in his friendship with the Kaiser. He knew that the favour of princes is more fragile than the thinnest glass, more transient than running water, a volatile and short-lived butterfly; but, like all sentimental lovers, he refused to listen to the promptings of his reason. And, as I have said, in his attitude to the Kaiser, to "the poor Kaiser," he was regrettably sentimental. This gave a tragic cast to his personality. He did not suffer the usual favourite's tragedy, enacted and re-enacted a thousand times in history since the fall of the archangel Lucifer and his Greek cousin Prometheus. There was nothing Shakespearean about his tragedy; there was nothing even striking about it, as there was about Bülow's when he ceased to be the affectionately pampered Bernhard and became "the beast." It had not

the shadow of a resemblance with the tragedy of Fouquet, *Surintendant* of finance to Louis XIV, who had no sooner completed his château Vaux le Vicomte, of more than royal magnificence, than Louis XIV had him dragged out of it. In vain did La Fontaine and other poets lament the *Surintendant's* fate and sing the praises of his gracious spirit and his liberality; in vain did Madame de Sévigné passionately defend him; he spent the rest of his life, nearly twenty years, in a gloomy prison. Anyone who has been to Vaux le Vicomte, with its gardens designed by Le Nôtre and its architecture that anticipated the splendour of Versailles, will have seen its defiant motto, "*Quo non ascendat?*"—"Whither will he not rise?" In one of the salons he will have seen the portrait of Mlle de La Vallière, the sight of which pierced the King's jealous heart. Anyone who is familiar with the career of this *Surintendant* will know that there could not be two more entirely different characters than that of the spendthrift, reckless Fouquet, intoxicated with his rapid rise, and that of Ballin, who had nothing whatever about him of the parvenu and who was so infinitely conscientious. But in one of the verses of La Fontaine's ode to Orontes—the poet's accused patron—there is a sigh of regret that fits every favourite of gods and kings:

"*Le plus sage s'endort sur la foi des zéphyr*s"—"the wisest fall asleep trusting in the zephyrs."

The little element of tragedy in Ballin's enchanted friendship did not become general knowledge: it remained a small, quiet, hidden flame until it was caught up and swallowed in the great conflagration which brought down everything, the nation's pride and power, the imperial throne, and his own merchant fleet. Then, when everything he had loved, everything he had lived for, had come to grief, Ballin suddenly

took his own life, abandoning a world that had lost its last attraction. The Renaissance painters often placed in a corner or at some other spot in their pictures a sort of little altar to their own family life, a figure or group intended to recall the dead past and so to suggest, alongside the great picture of Golgotha, the carrying of a private cross. The episode of Ballin's untheatrical exit from life similarly has its place in a corner of the colossal picture which no other in the gallery of world history excels in scale and intensity of tragedy.

Right up to the last days of July 1914 Ballin had no expectation of war. Like so many others, he tried to lay the ghost by persuading himself that in the real world around us ghosts no longer exist. In my book *The Eve of 1914* I have related how I wrote several articles exposing the naval negotiations entered into between Great Britain and Russia: my authority lay in material supplied to me by the Foreign Ministry, material which the Ministry's secret agent, M. de Siebert, Russian Secretary of Embassy in London, transmitted promptly and with conscientious regularity to Berlin. I have related how the Foreign Secretary, Herr von Jagow, then wrote to Ballin, with reference to these articles, and asked him to go to London and make inquiries there, and especially to convey a warning; and how Jagow affected to have no knowledge of the source of my information. I have always felt a measure of guilt in having been compelled to withhold the truth from Ballin, with whom I was on terms of close friendship. I had revealed the fact of those naval negotiations in London because an Anglo-Russian agreement would permit the German naval jingoes to throw off all restraint, and because we should thus be steering at once for incalculable dangers; but it was very painful to me not

to be allowed to be open with Ballin, who had so freely placed confidence in me. He probably guessed how matters stood, and realized my difficult situation, for he never mentioned the subject in our talks. His antipathy was directed against Jagow—it had existed already—and our friendship remained unclouded.

In London, where he met Churchill, Asquith and Haldane, his fears were dispelled; the City and public opinion were then against all participation in the quarrels on the Continent, and there seemed to him to be no ground for undue pessimism. He must have expected the invasion of Belgium, but never realized the effect it would have, and it went against the grain to look beyond the cheerful summer days, the peaceful idyll of the green English landscape. Lichnowsky himself had declared a hundred times over in his reports that, in any war between Germany and France, Great Britain would quite certainly, whatever the circumstances, hasten to the aid of the French; yet he too clung at the last moment to a delusive hope. It was fundamentally what happens at every deathbed: the relatives of the sick man have long known him to be doomed, and yet when in the very hour of death there comes a sudden flicker of revival, they put faith in it and speak hopefully to one another, with the death agony already begun.

During the war Ballin was, of course, summoned to discussions on all sorts of questions of economic and national organization. This was no special distinction for a man of his standing: at this period almost all the prominent "captains of industry" were called on and enabled to "talk big" in the various Commissions. But he was not only "co-opted"; he took part as of right, a right universally recognized, in discussions of which those other new pillars of the Government

knew nothing, and his words had a weight which theirs had not, even if he did not carry the day. When the war began it was quickly discovered that virtually no provision had been made for the feeding of the army and the nation, scarcely a thought had been given to the procuring and accumulation of foodstuffs; and representatives of the Government came to Hamburg to ask for Ballin's advice and assistance. He suggested the setting up of a national purchasing board, which later on took the form of a "Central Buying Company," and he did a great deal for the extension and improvement of this hotly attacked organization, continually battling with endless difficulties and vexations. It was merely a chance that, at the same moment when Ballin had to devote his energies to the food supply of the nation, another Jewish helper, Walter Rathenau, was at work in the Ministry of War, trying to make good the deficiencies in raw materials; the coincidence gives no ground, of course, for generalizations.

In spite of all the compliments paid to him for his energy and resourcefulness, Ballin could hardly fail to notice that at the moment when Great Britain declared war on Germany the Kaiser's friendship for him was shaken. He can hardly have failed to feel, even at a distance from the imperial entourage, the coldness with which his name, the "pro-Briton's," was now received in the Palace. Circumstances now favoured persons in the Kaiser's suite who had always resented the favour shown to Ballin. The Kaiser was generally at G.H.Q., and was no longer easily accessible; and there were no longer any festal occasions at Hamburg. William II, as was his way, had been giving vent to his feelings in the margin of diplomatic papers with rather wild comments on British statesmen and the British "shop-

keeper mentality." Presumably he had less power of resistance than in the past to depreciation of the "Anglophil" Ballin, or to his wife's gentle reproach—"I always warned you against him."

Since the beginning of the century, since Berlin's rejection of the British offers of alliance, every British Government had stated quite openly that, in the event of war between France and Germany, Great Britain must stand by France; no one could fairly charge them with deception, with setting a trap. Ballin, like Lichnowsky and, above all, the staunch Wolff-Metternich, had been working for an understanding with Great Britain in order to ward off the disaster of war, and manifestly the only crime of these men, and of all the others who had been advocates of friendship with the shameless "shopkeepers," had been to see more clearly than the false guides and their followers. "A prophet is not without honour save in his own country, and in his own house." But the prophet of woe who has preached to those who refused to see, and who is justified in the event, is not only without honour: he is furiously cursed.

Ballin could hardly fail to be concerned at the change in the Kaiser; but he affected to see none, and probably consoled himself with the thought that he would have no difficulty in regaining his friend's confidence—assuming that he really was now under a cloud, of which there was still no concrete evidence. The time would come, in the hour of need, or during the reconstruction in the bright days of victory, when a pressure of the hand would reaffirm their friendship. Not that he had any desire to see an hour of need arrive—and as for the bright days of victory, it required some little effort, and unusually promising circumstances, to believe in them. It is no depreciation of him to say that his own feelings, and

therewith his estimate of the situation in the war, could be affected at times by the wind that blew from the heights, raising or depressing his spirits. Most human beings are affected by chance circumstances in their outlook on things, and works of art have received devastating criticism, political considerations of vital importance have been overlooked, because a love-letter has failed to arrive: Antony lost the battle at Actium because he saw Cleopatra's faithless flight. Ballin seemed to me to have something of this sensitiveness of the lover. It would not be true to say that he was always at one extreme or the other, either up in the skies or in the depths of depression; but a cordial reception in the Kaiser's study, and the confidence that William II regarded him once more as a friend, could help him for a while over many cares and apprehensions; the smile that lit up the little room would also brighten the whole horizon.

Right or wrong, that, at all events, was my impression during the first months of the war. After the Regatta on the lower Elbe in June and the dinner to the Kaiser, at which I had been Ballin's guest, I did not see him again until November 20th, 1914. I then found him fearfully depressed, full of pessimism about Germany's future, grieved and embittered at the destruction of his life's work, like one who turns his face to the wall and will accept no comfort. He said, much as his friend Bülow did, that the nation had not the slightest idea of the situation, the terrible situation it was in. The censorship of the press must be done away with and the public enabled to see the truth. Just to change the tone of this melancholy talk, I uttered the empty phrase that peace might come overnight at any time; he replied almost furiously: "Do you believe it yourself?" Of course he knew that I did not believe it, that I had only caught at

a random futility of the sort employed to help the public to bear up.

A fortnight later we dined together at Hiller's in Unter den Linden; I found him in much the same mood, though more talkative, more ready to unburden his mind, and, in spite of his pessimism, visibly trying not to fall into the depth of hopelessness. This time he gave a very full account of the journey he had made to London at Jagow's desire at the end of July, in order to talk to Ministers about the news, ostensibly from a Parisian source, which I had published. He had expressed to Jagow a doubt whether my information had really come from Paris, and Jagow had assured him that it did not come from Berlin. He described his talk at dinner with Grey and Haldane, and gave his general impression of his last visit. Then we talked of General von Falkenhayn, who was now replacing Moltke in the West after the failure on the Marne and Moltke's complete breakdown. Falkenhayn stood high in the favour of William II, but outside the G.H.Q. he was regarded as merely an elegant place-hunter, without an idea, and careless of human lives. Ballin mentioned that he had asked Bethmann why he did not urge the Kaiser to dismiss Falkenhayn. Bethmann replied that he could not do that. Then he, Ballin, asked:

"Shall I speak to the Kaiser, shall I go to see him?"

Bethmann had been greatly disturbed at this offer, and had advised him not to attempt to see the Kaiser, who was in a state of mind in which he was better not upset.

Was that really all that troubled Bethmann? Probably he did not want to share the right of advising the Kaiser on important questions with a private individual of no official standing. Apart from this intelligible prompting, the idea may have crossed his mind that Ballin was over-



confident and that an audience might not turn out by any means as Ballin anticipated. Did it not show once more that only an experienced statesman can have the indispensable flair for what is possible at Court, and that even the ablest amateur is, at best, very inadequately acquainted with these difficult arts?

Ballin, after relating this episode, went on to say that Bethmann had been like an offended schoolmaster, and full of complaints about British ingratitude; he had always, he said, done his utmost to improve Anglo-German relations, and in return the British had descended to the blackest treachery against his own person. Ballin had sharply reproached Bethmann for giving the Austrians *carte blanche*; he said:

"I have spent all my life, if I may speak of myself, building up something that has been of immense value to the German Empire, and here you have come, you and one or two other people, and brought it all to the ground. And I am only one example; it is just the same with the whole nation and its whole industrial life."

That day, as we sat together, Ballin considered an "honourable peace" to be possible, but there was nothing more to be got, and probably not even that if the war were prolonged. In his talk with Bethmann they had come to the question of the annexation of Belgian territory. He had opposed it and had said to Bethmann:

"Take possession, if you are able to, of the railways, and create economic links, but do not take any land, and leave the King his crown—after all, he has behaved extremely well."

We often had conversations of this sort over a meal during the war, when Ballin was in Berlin on any official business.

We almost always had the room that was reserved for him at Hiller's; he found it the pleasantest place in Berlin, almost a bit of Hamburg. He had his own cognac there, and his own cigars; he was at home there and used to invite his friends. The management provided the courses he liked, and knew what wines to have ready for big and little dinner parties.

I met him in Potsdamer Platz on the afternoon of February 19th, 1915, and he agreed at once to come through the Tiergarten with me. His readiness for a stroll and his more untroubled expression showed at once that a burden had been lifted off his mind. He had been with the Kaiser the evening before, and really there seemed to be no serious estrangement between them, at all events no rift beyond healing. Ballin said that the Kaiser's nerves were very jumpy, and his moods incalculable and quickly changing; he now took sleeping draughts, which he never used to do. Yesterday, however, he had been calm and reasonable, even when the talk turned to England, and had discussed matters without any fierce outbursts. He had no intention of parting from Bethmann—he was sure he had no one better to put in his place. He had defended General von Falkenhayn against all criticism. The "poor Kaiser" had no idea how ruthlessly he was being let down and how little trouble was being taken to arrange appearances in public that would bring him nearer to his people. Ballin now considered that Germany should lease Zeebrügge from Belgium and that Antwerp should be administered by a port commission. I was rather astonished, and objected that conditions of this sort would prevent the very thing he wanted, reconciliation with England. He replied that he did not think so. I saw that he was now expecting rather more than an "honourable

peace," and even thought that peace might be possible before so very long. He said that at least every few days they would be sinking a British ship, and that would make the British more inclined for peace. Such miracles had some enchantment worked with his winter of discontent.

But it must not be supposed that his every action was inspired and his judgment entirely ruled by the thought of his exalted friend. Especially in matters of the German shipping trade, of his Hamburg shipping, and the interests and the power of the Hapag, he had never been in need of external inspiration. Always then it had been plain how stupid it was to brand him as an "Englishman" and to imagine that he would grant favours to the British at Germany's expense. His loyalty to the German flag amounted to a religion, and, much as he desired an understanding with Great Britain, during the war he was against concessions which in his opinion would have been an offence to the flag and have been likely to damage German prestige. I recall a discussion between Ballin and Bernhard Dernburg, who had just returned from a propaganda tour in America. It was at the end of June, 1915; there sat at Ballin's table, in the familiar room at Hiller's, Dernburg; Wolff-Metternich, the ex-Ambassador in London; Herr von Holtzendorff, a director of the Hapag; and myself. There had been a committee meeting in the morning, at which most of us had been present, to settle the wording of the reply to an American Note. Ballin declared in annoyance that at this meeting Dernburg had upset everything to which he had at last got Tirpitz and Jagow to agree. It had been intended to tell the Americans that, if they considered that their own ships and those of the neutral countries were insufficient to assure regular passenger and freight traffic with Europe,

they should be allowed two British and two German ships; and then Dernburg had suddenly come on the scene and said that America would not accept the two German ships, the American Government would not think of agreeing to that proposal. With that Dernburg had wrecked the meeting. Jagow had dropped into a seat in desperation and groaned once more that he was at the end of his resources. Now the quarrel was resumed at Hiller's between Ballin and Dernburg, and there was a fairly hot dispute. Ballin said that in spite of the enormous losses he would suffer as head of the Hapag—for many of his ships were laid up in American ports—he considered it impossible to agree to four British ships, and Tirpitz too was unprepared to agree to it. Really, in all these questions Ballin was totally unlike the picture that had got fixed in some limited brains; indeed, when others had not his conception of what was due to the German flag he became actually stubborn and rude. It is true that when the agitation in favour of the unrestricted submarine war began to spread he opposed the mad idea, only, unhappily, with no more success than other people of good sense. He knew that those who declared that the United States could not build ships or fight were talking nonsense: he knew the psychology of the Americans, their inexhaustible resources, and their energy, and his business man's intelligence lent him clearer vision than the military mentality permitted.

In July 1915 Ballin and I ourselves reached a point at which our views differed. It was the question of "war aims": like his friend Bülow, he was unable to agree with me. But we did not let it spoil our relations; he was, indeed, such a splendid fellow that he was always guided at once by his heart, even if his reason was not always able to follow it.

Since the beginning of 1915 the propaganda of the annexationists had been very energetic and continually growing. It had been fed with ample supplies of money by the heavy industries, who had already fished such profits out of the lakes of blood on the battlefields, and were now stretching out to seize the mineral regions of Longwy and Briey and the Belgian coalmines. The movement had captured the habitués of the *Stammtische* (the café "reserved tables"): it was led by six "national associations," and thousands of simple and unsuspecting university teachers had allowed themselves to be mobilized by the gentlemen who ran these societies. This immoral speculation, contemptuous of all international justice, was making any approach to peace impossible, and calmly contemplating immense sacrifices of human lives. Something had to be done to combat it. I spoke of this necessity that evening at Hiller's. I asked the four men who were there with me whether they would put their signatures to a statement on these lines: "We are opposed in principle to annexations or the oppression of independent national units." All four of them seemed ready to sign this. I had the impression that Ballin was a little anxious to change the subject; he started at once to regale us with an amusing detail in his conversations with Bethmann. Bethmann had exclaimed: "I wish I were dead!" and Ballin had said to him:

"Do you know the story of the sergeant to whom a private said that very thing, 'I wish to God I were dead'? The sergeant's reply was:

" 'That's just what would suit you, damn you, to lie all day in your coffin and do nothing!' "

A nice little story, only it was curious that he went off at a tangent in such a hurry and sidetracked the conversation.

Learning that Prince Hatzfeld (Duke of Trachenberg) and Hans Delbrück were also proposing to start a movement against annexations, I got into touch with them, and we agreed to act together. On the evening of July 7 there met in a room in the Prussian Parliament about fifty persons, prominent business men, leaders of the professions, members of parliament, ex-diplomats, and members of the nobility. Prince Hatzfeld took the chair and announced that on this occasion the discussion would be confined to the Belgian question. Very sensible and reasonable speeches were made by the National Liberal Professor Wilhelm Kahl and the Conservative Professor Sering against any annexation; the Liberal Professor Anschütz gave a wealth of pros and cons, well mixed up; Dernburg was against anything going beyond a Customs Union. The best speech, often fired with passion, was made by Hans Delbrück. Finally, as I have already mentioned in an earlier chapter, Hatzfeld was asked to form a small committee to draft a declaration; he asked Delbrück, Kahl, Dernburg, August Stein of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and myself to join it. I had a draft ready in my pocket, and gave it to Delbrück; he gave me in return three other drafts, by himself, Hatzfeld, and Lujo Brentano. I had noticed that Ballin was present. But he disappeared immediately after Kahl's speech, and I was unpleasantly impressed when I saw him go away like this, as though from some uninteresting performance at a theatre.

Two days later the committee met in Hans Delbrück's villa in Grunewald. We discussed the text of the declaration, and my draft was adopted, with a few amendments. The other drafts were weaker, with the main points less vigorously set out, and, with the exception of a few sentences, were not particularly striking. A good passage from Dern-

burg's draft was worked in. The statement of principle for which I called, condemning the incorporation of politically independent peoples, was generally approved. In view of the difficulty of gaining the adhesion of university circles, Kahl wanted to add a final sentence containing a vague and consequently ambiguous reference to a peace "corresponding to the nation's sacrifices." Dernburg and I raised strong objections, and Adolf von Harnack, Delbrück's brother-in-law and a near neighbour, was asked to arbitrate; he pronounced in favour of taking account of the feelings of the University.

We sent the declaration in this form to a number of prominent personalities. Among the first to sign were Siemens, Franz von Mendelssohn, Count Monts, Count Wolff-Metternich, Herr Lahusen (a member of the supreme consistorial court and a great authority in the Protestant Church), and Prince Henckel-Donnersmark. Ballin did not sign; he sent me a long letter explaining his not very convincing reasons. He had told the Chancellor, he said, about it, and Bethmann Hollweg's opinion was that it was too soon for a declaration of this sort. There was a sentence in the manifesto to the effect that measures of security must not be allowed to lead indirectly to annexations, and Ballin considered this open to misapprehension and too radical. He also considered it important that mention should be made of the acquisition of Belgian Congo, and there ought also to be something about the leasing of Zeebrügge. Moreover, the manifesto should not be signed by a so-called élite, but should have hundreds of thousands of signatures when published.

I replied to Ballin with equal fullness: What Bethmann might want did not settle the matter; we had convictions of

our own, and regarded it as our duty to profess them publicly and clearly. Anyone who endorsed the principle that independent nations must not be annexed did himself honour in doing so. A declaration to this effect was a moral action. If it was desired to carry on propaganda abroad, this was certainly the best way to do it. The declaration did not make it impossible to acquire the Congo State. It was easy to get hundreds of thousands of signatures, even millions; an invitation, for example, to the Social Democratic Party would secure them. But that was not what was aimed at.

On July 18 Ballin wrote to me again. He was planning a more far-reaching resolution—he said nothing about its terms. If he signed ours, it would cut the ground from under his plan for later on. If, however, I was intent on having his name and would be offended with him if he did not give it, I might add it, and he would give up his opposition. That afternoon I had lunch at the house of Herr von Holtzendorff (the Hapag director), with Zimmermann, Under Secretary of State, Major Deutelmöser, and our host's brother, the Admiral. Holtzendorff told me that Ballin had just telephoned to him and asked me not to put his name to the declaration; he hoped to be able to discuss the thing fully with me soon. I replied that even without this withdrawal I should, of course, not have taken advantage of the permission so unwillingly given.

Huldermann writes in his book that Ballin had in mind the acquisition by Germany of a naval station in North Africa or elsewhere on the Atlantic, but except for that wanted a peace "without annexations or indemnities." He was firmly convinced that even after a peace on terms of compromise the impression made on the world by what Germany had achieved would be overwhelming, so that Germany needed



no territorial gains and no indemnity; because of his adherence to this view, writes Huldermann, Ballin was counted among the "*Flaumacher*," the defeatists. There is something wrong here. It is quite true that this was Ballin's conviction, but he gave expression to it only late in the day, and even then only in the privacy of his home. With his keen business sense it would have been quite impossible for the errors in the calculation to escape him. Was the German nation to be told, at the end of this tremendous war, "Your fathers and brothers and sons have not fallen in vain, all your sacrifices have not gone for nothing; look! we have taken from the Belgians, who refused to agree to the wrong we imposed on them, this paradise by the Congo"? The picture the German nation had formed for itself of the Congo region, especially since the Agadir affair, was that of a paradise of mosquitoes, of malaria and sleeping sickness. It would certainly think more of a negotiated peace without an embellishment of this sort, just as a green fir sapling unadorned looks more beautiful than a Christmas tree decorated with a little faded tinsel; and was it likely to add to Germany's prestige to haggle for so wretched a gain at the end of this war?

Ballin knew all this as well as anybody else. He merely invented these shifts and affected to regard them as serious, and, no doubt, persuaded himself that they were, much as a boy may discover the most incredible reasons for not doing his homework. He wanted to keep himself free from engagements as far as possible, and to avoid taking up any definite standpoint. He was meticulous in every moral question, and had a strong sense of justice, but he did not regard politics as a field governed by principles, and probably considered the stressing of general principles as a pedantry beneath a man of the world. He disliked finding himself in a crowd, even a

crowd that in reality was a very select company. He was ready to help, but not to enter into any public commitment.

Moreover, Ballin had a feeling, perhaps too strong a feeling, of diplomatic responsibility. He was used to taking part in acts of state, and felt also—seeing that he was regarded as a friend of the Kaiser—that he had special responsibilities; thus his activities and the consideration he owed to others united with his inclination in giving him a diplomatic tinge. Needless to say, he had more ability, more knowledge of the world, and more alertness and open-mindedness than the average member of the diplomatic corps. But at times his independence of spirit retreated behind the airs of a statesman who must not carelessly blurt out everything he thinks. Even a second-rate journalist, when he comes to write a leading article on some question of foreign policy, is often so inhibited by his sense of diplomatic responsibility that not a single plain and intelligible sentence comes from his pen. It was not the Congo but this sense of responsibility that he took seriously.

Some time after all this he told me that Bethmann Hollweg had asked him not to sign, and he had felt that he must comply with his request. In spite of this, he said, he had sacrificed Bethmann's good will: when Tirpitz threatened to resign he had sent a telegram urging the Kaiser not to permit it, and the Chancellor had been offended. In February 1916, when Lichnowsky and I were at Hiller's with Ballin, he told us that he had written to the Kaiser and strongly deprecated the plan of unrestricted submarine warfare. This time his intervention had set von Falkenhayn, the Chief of Staff, against him. He had had a talk with Falkenhayn and had protested once more that the Kaiser should not be kept so much in the background and made a stranger to his

people; Falkenhayn had given him the curious answer that "his Kaiser was too good" for such theatrical tricks. To this Ballin had replied:

"He is my Kaiser too, and the whole nation's Kaiser, and it is a sin against him to do nothing to keep up the nation's trust in him."

In August 1916 the *Berliner Tageblatt* was suspended once more on account of my attacks on the heavy industries for their annexationist propaganda, suspended indefinitely and with a plain threat to ruin the paper. Ballin came to my assistance and took the necessary steps with Lieutenant General von Kessel, Commander-in-Chief in the Marches and in the casemates of the censorship. Ballin acted even more promptly than Bethmann, who was always very glad to see my attacks on the rabid nationalists, but subsequently would merely remark with a melancholy smile that one could not annoy the *miles gloriosus* with impunity. I should like to mention, incidentally, that in spite of occasional expressions of passive resignation Bethmann Hollweg seemed to me to have grown in strength of personality under the wear and tear of the continual struggle with the *miles gloriosus* and the patriotic associations—and under a certain feeling of compunction with which he was manifestly burdened. Ballin also thought this.

After Bethmann's fall Ballin wanted to see Bülow or Count Bernstorff made Chancellor, but it was impossible to get past the strong barrier of the entourage and put these proposals to the Kaiser himself, and in Bülow's case especially there was not the slightest prospect of success. The persons who were permitted contact with the Kaiser presented the astonished German people with Dr. Michaelis as Chancellor, perhaps in the idea that the net spread round Germany had to be

gnawed through and that for that purpose they needed the church mouse. Nobody had any idea yet how we should all come out of the storm, but the choice of this Chancellor revealed the mental quality of the High Command—it was manifest that it was without the very rudiments of political understanding.

In that same year, 1917, Ballin suffered a further and very serious blow from the wisdom that was ruling the realm. At the time of the outbreak of war a very large part of the Hapag fleet was in foreign ports, in Italy, Portugal, the United States, Brazil, the Argentine, and elsewhere. It would not have been difficult to save these ships, for the Relief Committee that brought food to the Belgian population during the German occupation wanted to acquire them, and after that they could have been brought from Rotterdam, where they were to be stationed, to Hamburg. Ballin represented the matter to the Naval Staff, but they refused permission for this, and also refused to allow the ships to be sold to neutral Powers, the Argentine, for instance. The Austrian shipping companies, which were not interfered with, sold everything they had abroad, and turned their impoverishment into wealth. When the unrestricted submarine campaign was announced and the United States replied with their declaration of war, the Hapag ships were confiscated, and the German Admiralty ordered that the machinery should be destroyed in so far as this could still be done. Ballin, in a furious letter of remonstrance to the Minister of the Interior, who had not given him the slightest support, pointed out that the Hapag, "which was the greatest shipping concern in the world, and at the outbreak of war had had a fleet totalling some 1,500,000 tons," had now "lost the whole of these ships, with very few exceptions,"

and that this had been due "far less to captures and the sinking of ships in the service of the imperial navy, than to the action of our own Government." He had had all these splendid ships built, one after another, had lovingly watched their growth on the slips, had fitted and furnished them down to the smallest detail with tender care, had looked on in happy pride as they began their maiden voyages, with music and cheering and the waving of handkerchiefs. He could see them all now, and knew where, in what foreign port, each one of them was being cast away—needlessly abandoned, uselessly sacrificed.

Adding the occasions of which I know to those mentioned by Huldermann, Ballin seems to have met the Kaiser or been with him five or six times in the course of the four years of the war. On January 10, 1916, he dined with the Kaiser and Kaiserin in the New Palace at Potsdam. There were two other guests—five persons in all. After dinner there was a lot of discussion of the U-boats and their potentialities, and the Kaiser had the impression that Ballin tried to get him to agree to a great submarine campaign to overpower Great Britain—in the spirit of Tirpitz and of those irresponsibles whose cheerful motto was "*Feste druff!*"—"Give it 'em!" Bethmann Hollweg disagreed with this programme, and William II quoted Ballin's view, or what he took to be Ballin's view. Bethmann asked Ballin to explain, and on this Ballin wrote to the Kaiser to say that he had received confidential information as to the true number, a very small one, of the available U-boats; with so few as this it might be possible "to scratch Great Britain's skin, but certainly not to compel her to make peace." In May 1917 Ballin received an invitation to G.H.Q. from the High Command, and there, as he notes in his diary, he talked with the Kaiser "for several

hours, *tête-à-tête*, after the very short war-time meal." He found the Kaiser, and Ludendorff with him, "in a much too optimistic mood," much too sure of the efficacy of the submarine campaign, and blind to the fact that such methods enraged the whole world and drove those states which had still been hesitant into joining the enemy coalition.

On September 14, 1917, after Bethmann's fall, the Kaiser stopped for a day at Hamburg on his way home from Heligoland. Ballin noted in his diary that William was "in the rosiest of moods," and "full of a confidence in victory for which, in my view, there is no ground whatever as things are." Ballin wrote to a member of the Kaiser's entourage with whom he was on friendly terms, probably Herr von Reischach, and tried in his letters to give the denizens of G.H.Q. a true picture of the situation, but they preferred to let the Kaiser enjoy his happy isolation from harsh realities. In these letters Ballin protested again and again that the Kaiser was being kept out of touch with the nation, and again and again put forward unanswerable demonstrations of the mistakenness of the submarine warfare; but it was an entire waste of energy, a vain appeal to reason.

It is impossible, of course, to give the exact temperature of the Kaiser's friendship in those years. Feelings are rarely unmixed, and they almost always change from moment to moment. It is well known that in William's case the transition from one mood to the next was exceptionally rapid. Moreover, his sense of power, of kaiserdome, encouraged him to permit himself to treat people according to the whim of the moment, and if he did not want to reveal his whole mind to them he was helped out by his habitual theatricality. In his relations with Ballin the rites and customs of friendship were preserved. Relations could not

be as close in war time as in time of peace, but care was taken not to sever them; the friendship was merely suspended, not actually broken off. Without attempting the precision of a thermometer, I think it may be said that the imperial cordiality, which certainly shone out undiminished at each meeting, was nevertheless a little like the winter sun in the Riviera. The dwellers by the Mediterranean cannot quite trust those bright rays: even when they feel hot they are no more than a thin golden fabric in front of the cold air. After Ballin's death William did not let his occupation with the arrangements for settling into his asylum in Holland prevent him from expressing his sympathy with the family and his own emotion, and beyond doubt there must have been real regret for the vanished figure, so far as circumstances permitted. But when William II wrote his *Memoirs* he preferred no longer to describe himself as a "true friend," and "dear Ballin" became "Herr Ballin."

There was a last meeting between the Kaiser and Ballin in the palace at Wilhelmshöhe on September 5, 1918—after the collapse of the great offensive in the west, and at a time when there could no longer be any doubt that the final disaster was approaching. At the request of Ludendorff and his most gifted and most dangerous assistant, the Pan-German Lieutenant-Colonel Bauer, Hugo Stinnes had gone to Hamburg and urged Ballin to enlighten the Kaiser about the situation, and above all to represent the immediate necessity of replacing Herr von Hertling by a man who could do with a little less sleep. William II no longer had the assistance of the straightforward Herr von Valentini; the "patriots" had secured Valentini's removal, and there was a new Head of the Civil Cabinet, a rigid palace warden and a bad adviser, the strongly conservative Herr von Berg. He

had arranged that this time Ballin should not be received privately but "in audience," which enabled him to be present himself and to take steps to prevent the guest from indulging in any undesirable candour.

The Kaiser had been impatiently waiting for Ballin. He went for a walk with him, and Herr von Berg walked attentively and watchfully by their side. "Once more," Ballin wrote in his diary, "I found the Kaiser badly misinformed, and in the high spirits he likes to show in the presence of a third party." The state of things had been so misrepresented to the Kaiser that the grievous failure of the offensive had been turned into a success. "It is all being served up to the poor monarch in such a way that he has not the slightest idea how disastrous it is." Ballin gave expression to his fears and urged that negotiations with Wilson should be begun at once. Wilson, he said, was an idealist, but if there were any more delay the war party would get hold of him and win him over. The Kaiser was in favour of negotiations, but did not think there was any great urgency. We must wait till autumn and then, when the western armies had occupied the new positions, discussions would be arranged with the enemy Powers through the mediation of the Queen of Holland.

"Then, when I was getting too outspoken, Herr von Berg cleverly stepped in," writes Ballin in his diary. Subsequently the guardian angel told Ballin that the Kaiser "must not be made too pessimistic." Since William II must not be allowed to become pessimistic the whole purpose of the visit was frustrated. Ballin went away from the palace—in which Napoleon III had stayed after Sedan and had had leisure to meditate on the disastrousness of illusions.



I saw Ballin once more, for the last time, one evening in October. He had invited my wife and myself to dine with him, and once more we sat in the back room at Hiller's where, during the four years of war, there had been so much discussion of men and affairs, mistakes and their makers, illusory victories, conceivable chances still left, and the never-ceasing downfall. Now there was nothing more to be said about all that. The conversation, skirting this subject and yet unable to get away from it, could only drag along, like a funeral procession. Nobody was equal to the old brisk exchanges. Ballin was filled with incurable melancholy. He looked ill; the fresh bronzed colour of old had long disappeared, now that he was no longer able to travel through the sea breezes; his face was deeply lined. But amid all his weariness and depression he remained gallant and chivalrous. At that time it was only seldom possible, and only for very few people, to dine in the way that was still made possible in this restaurant, but I do not think that any of us really enjoyed it. Unless my memory betrays me, Ballin himself was no longer the great Hamburg trencherman of old; he only filled his glass still with the treasured old cognac and smoked his strong cigars. My wife told him that I had run short of the red wine I used to drink at night, or rather in the early hours of the morning, before going to bed, making so pleasant an interlude between work and sleep. A few days later there came from Hamburg a big case of Spanish wine, with Ballin's compliments. He did not know it, but it was his farewell greeting. On November 9, the day of the Revolution, the day William II fled to Holland, Ballin was overcome by his feelings, and took from the drawer of his desk in the Hapag offices the veronal pastilles, or whatever drug it was, that he used as a sleeping-draught. Realizing

what he had done, he told his friend Max Warburg and sent for a doctor; but it was too late.

It is not customary in Europe, as in old Japan, for high dignitaries and officers and other patriots to disembowel themselves in their grief over a defeat; this actually happened, after a few mishaps of little importance, so recently as during the Russo-Japanese war. Hara-kiri for national reasons has found no more imitators in our latitudes than the voluntary cremation of Hindu widows, and even those most closely concerned, statesmen, diplomats, generals, and other eminent personages, have not been deterred by the loss of a war or the fall of a throne from following the European custom of living on. It is true that it has been considered honourable for captains to go down with their sinking ship, even if the crew have been saved. But people of ordinary common sense have never been able to share the view that honour demands this useless sacrifice. So it must be regarded as entirely commendable that with one single exception the whole of William II's extolled and pampered "loyal *triarii*," the whole of the upper circles of society under the monarchy, and all the presidents of all the patriotic associations and café *Stammtische*, successfully battled with their intelligible depression to the extent of refraining from suicide. The single exception was an old officer who, according to the newspaper reports, shot himself, finding life no longer worth living after the collapse of Kaiser and kingdom. Shakespeare makes the faithful Titinius, after the death of Cassius at Philippi, run his fallen leader's sword through his own body, exclaiming:

By your leave, gods: this is a Roman's part:  
Come, Cassius' sword, and find Titinius' heart.

It was in truth a Roman custom to allow grief at the fall of the great to go as far as self-destruction. The same thing happened, of course, among Oriental peoples—for instance, among the people of Israel. "And when his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him." The evilly inclined might thus contend that Ballin, by his voluntary act in such uncontrollable grief at the disaster suffered by the monarchy and the country, showed that he was an alien in Germania. There would be no more sense in this contention than in glorifying Ballin's act of despair and contrasting it with the cooler and more elastic view formed by the true-blooded lieges who lived on to a great age after the disappearance of crown and sceptre, and who were not infrequently to be seen in the most exalted places under the new régime.

It would also, of course, be altogether wrong to suggest that Ballin took poison simply because defeat and revolution had left his own creation in ruins and given the deathblow to his life's work. The largest and finest part of the merchant fleet he had created had been destroyed during the war; there could scarcely be worse things to come; in conversation and in his letters Ballin had often declared that after the war he would retire into private life, and on November 9 nothing happened to him that did not happen to very many of us, and nothing that was unendurable. Without underestimating the effect of other influences, one is bound to hold that the "Kaiser's friend" broke down under the tragedy of the emotional relationship that bound him to this Empire and to the person of this monarch, now a refugee. He had not the magnificent nerve and the thick skin of those others, and was decidedly too sentimental.

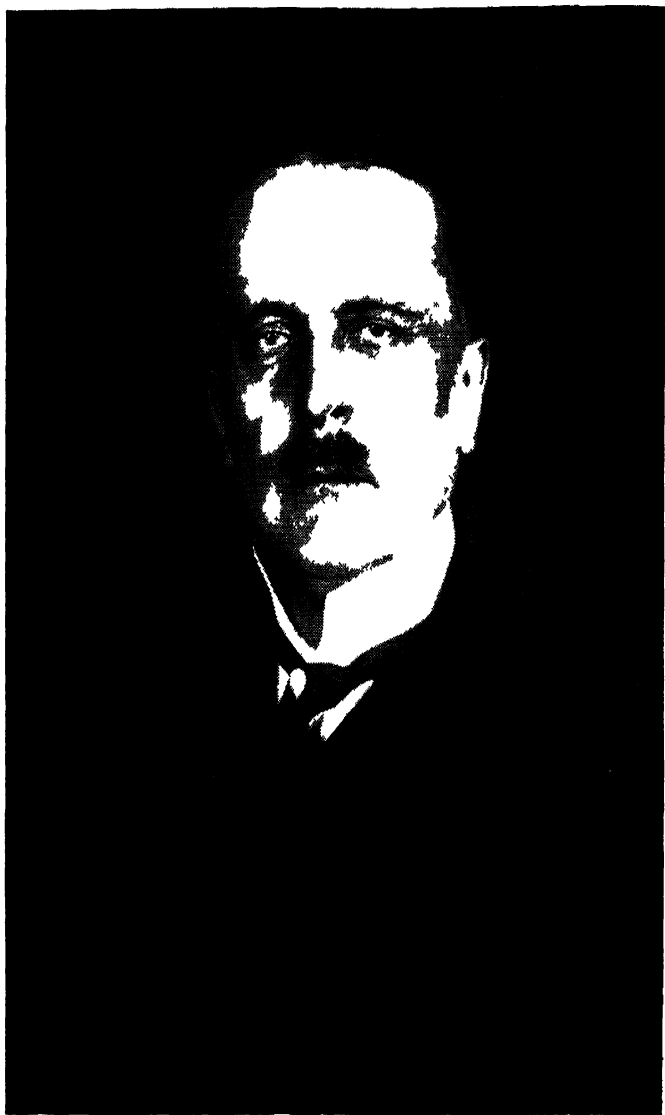
## VIII

### THE KNIGHT OF ROMANCE

**E**VEN under the Republic there were limits to the freedom of expression of opinion, and George Gross was prosecuted after the publication of his cartoon "Christ with the gas mask." Gross more or less specialized in a sarcastic heightening of hard and ugly or vulgar traits in his representations of characteristic types of the dominant classes. On the dust-cover of a collection of these studies he set a portrait of Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, so like the original and so minutely and almost invisibly touched up that it scarcely seemed intended as a caricature. The artist appeared to be suggesting that there was nothing he need do, that nature herself had formed here in perfection a typical face of the epoch, with nothing omitted, a masterpiece of satire as it was. Could a mixture of decadence and junker arrogance be better expressed than in this pale, nervous face, this broad, commanding brow, the thin hair above it smoothed down and carefully parted, the straight and narrow nose, the small, saucy moustache, the prominent chin, and the veiled and yet challengingly glancing eyes, expressing the indifference of a tired and exhausted race and yet an unquenchable spirit of command? Was this not the unmistakable scion of those aristocratic freebooters of old, who would challenge one another over any trifle, who looked down with contempt on the rich traders of the towns, and who, when they were no longer able to despoil the townsmen and grind down the

peasants, went off as fighting men in the service of any foreign court, and unfailingly brought home with them some new exotic fashion? The artist felt that this was a typical head, and an apt frontispiece for his undivine comedy—just as a collection of ancient masterpieces might be prefaced by its compiler with the Belvedere Apollo.

But the figure of Count Brockdorff-Rantzau was by no means characteristic of a class or a period, by no means representative, as were the pot-bellied types of a Daumier or a Monnier. The count was a man of strong and distinct personality, a man of very striking qualities such as few of his contemporaries possessed. The characteristic feature of all the various groups of the ruling class was the lack of the characteristic, the lack of outstanding or even of picturesque personalities, the dull, unvarying repetition of stereotyped forms, mass production. To take Count Brockdorff-Rantzau as an embodiment in externals of his caste was a much too flattering compliment to it. He might have belonged to a different continent from the robust and ruddy Philistines of Prussian junkerdom, and even among the higher aristocracy, who with their international connexions could sometimes show more interesting and individual personalities, the count still stood out from the rest. He was not, of course, a "pure-blooded" German; the inquiries into ancestry which are so rich in embarrassments for the builders of the family trees of the German nobility bring no comfort in the case of the Rantzaus and the Brockdorffs. The Rantzaus were a Danish noble family, who traced their ancestry back to the twelfth century; they had been field marshals, governors and privy councillors to the Danish kings; Josias Rantzau, wooden-legged, one-armed, and even further mutilated, whose praises Boileau sang, had been a French marshal and



COUNT BROCKDORFF-RANTZAU



had won his wounds and his fame in fighting under the great Condé against the Germans.

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau was born in 1869, son of Count Hermann zu Rantzau and a Countess Brockdorff-Kletkamp; he came into the world with a twin brother Ernst, and was named Ulrich after a great-uncle, Baron Ulrich Brockdorff, a Danish diplomat, who had been Minister at Paris, Madrid, and London. This great-uncle adopted Ulrich, and from him Ulrich inherited the Brockdorff estate of Annettenhöh, near Schleswig. It may be an illusion, which could not have arisen without the knowledge of this family history, but it always seemed to me that the "junker" elements, real or fancied, in Count Brockdorff-Rantzau—the rather lordly gestures, the pugnacity, the proud bearing, characteristics usually modified, or concealed as a matter of good taste, by aristocratic *grands seigneurs*—were a foreign inheritance and not in the least Prussian. Was this not much more of the nature of a reincarnation of the qualities of Josias Rantzau, who went with his one leg and one arm into every engagement? And the count's intellectual refinement, equally noticeable with his alert self-confidence—was it not much more akin to the spirit of the Danish beechwoods, which had yielded a literature of the finest sensitiveness, feeling its way with the most delicate of antennæ? However this may be, George Gross was in error in treating Count Brockdorff-Rantzau as representative of the German junker caste. For all the difference of political and social outlook between the count and his conventional neighbours, he had beyond denial the air and the style of the aristocrat; but it was not the corporate sense of an aristocracy, not an arrogance based on the privileges of class that gave his features their stamp, but an individual ambition and a very strong personality.



The artist had given him only a lifeless, immobile mask; in reality nothing could be more complicated than this personality and nothing livelier and more changeable than this face. Instead of a single mask there were numbers of little disguises, one for each situation and each subject; but behind them all there was the firm and permanent foundation of the essential personality, just as the changing sea is a changing surface never reaching the motionless depths. Very often when I was sitting opposite Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, in the flat he shared with his brother in the Viktoriastrasse in Berlin, or at my flat or elsewhere, the play of his features was enormously amusing. One needed to know how to distinguish the genuine and natural from the pose—often the instinctive and by no means deliberate pose: the pose *à la Bismarck*, *à la Talleyrand*, *à la Mirabeau*. There he would sit, sometimes rather exhausted by a tussle only just fought out, at other times ready for any jest; smoking one cigarette after another—not to soothe his nerves as Bethmann did, and not to enjoy the savour, but with the steady regularity of a cricket's chirp—and steadily filling his liqueur glass as it emptied. He liked to bring an element of the informal or rather daring into the conversation: it contrasted with a ceremoniousness that seemed to be in his bones, often giving him an air of deliberation that smacked of preciousness. In his courtesy one could see the influence of an old-time etiquette that had really outlived its generation. Then again he might offer flatteries and overdrawn compliments, or out would come his ingrained pride, but not in the least in the style of the peacock, whose brain is small and only his feathers big. The dark suit on his slender figure was of no particularly modern cut, and whatever clothes he wore he always had absurdly high starched collars, opening under

his chin, as though his neck were too slender to carry his head unaided. It was a piece of involuntary coquetry of the sort seen less often in Germany than in England or France, countries of much older social traditions, where a marquis or an Academician or a great banker may hold fast to a hat of a century ago to show his independence of the fashions. Oddest of all, odder even than the grandfather's collars, and yet associated in some romantic way with that starched symbol and with the slightly old-world courtesy, were his eyes, whose glance might seem at one moment to come from deep down and at the next to be lurking behind a thin crepuscular veil. Sometimes the veiling would be of the slightest, sometimes the gaze would seem to turn inwards; sometimes it would be reminiscent of the fantasies of E. T. A. Hoffmann, and sometimes of some wizard making clever play with pseudo-mystical forces.

The count's private life seemed a little bizarre to his world, and was plentifully talked about. Everybody knew that he smoked a record number of cigarettes and drank a great deal of cognac, though his wits seemed only to be sharpened and stimulated by it. Everybody knew, too, how he would stop up at night over his work and then sleep until late in the day, when his official duties did not compel him to forgo this compensation, as happened later in Moscow. His staff at the Moscow Embassy had a high regard for him, but complained bitterly of the way he would rob them of their night's rest, sending for them after midnight, keeping them with him, and beginning to dictate reports and letters in the early hours of the morning. It was well known that he had stocks of good food and choice wines sent from Berlin to Moscow, and that, as was natural and only in keeping with his feudal traditions, he was particular about the style of his

household. It was well known also that, like his ancestor Heinrich Rantzau, governor of a dozen provinces for the Danish kings, though he had not the immense wealth of that famous man, he was a collector of old works of art and antiques, and that in Russia, with the entire consent of the Soviet authorities, with whom he was on good terms, he made precious discoveries. In his purchases he showed not only the good judgment of the connoisseur but also the commercial acumen that was of so much service to German industry in his business negotiations of a less private nature.

But nobody had heard of any woman who could have played a part in his life. There was nothing to suggest that he had ever been involved in a love affair. Consequently, those people who jump at the simplest and most unintelligent solution of every psychological riddle, who are unable to handle fine threads and can only make use of a rope as thick as their fists, found the explanation in inclinations of another sort. The day came when I was able to help Count Brockdorff-Rantzau to dispose effectively of a villainous attempt to blackmail him, and I knew the indignation that filled him in his battle with this monstrous business. The vision of some far princess may have filled his youth, some locked deed-box may have contained an old and faded portrait, no longer in the fashion but eternally adorable. Brockdorff-Rantzau's biographer, Stern-Rubarth, has evidently had a look into the deed-box, for he is able to tell of "an early and exceptionally deep feeling for a married woman in high society," which cast a shadow on the rest of the count's life. It is so much the story one would expect that one is inclined to be sceptical, as with the stories of attempted assassinations that happen rather too conveniently. What was manifest was the strong and deep

feeling that united Count Brockdorff-Rantzau with two persons who were dear to him—his old mother at Annettenhöh, and his twin brother, Count Ernst Rantzau, who was an imperial chamberlain and *Vortragender Rat* in the Ministry of the Imperial Household.

The two brothers were inseparable. Each had his friends, but each had only one confidant, Ernst his twin brother Ulrich and Ulrich his twin brother Ernst. Count Ernst, Rantzau without the Brockdorff, never came into prominence in politics. There was one occasion when he had a historic mission to perform. He was sent to Holland to persuade the reluctant William II to sign his formal abdication; this he did, and brought the document to Berlin. But the public did not learn the envoy's name. And even those persons who still constituted "Berlin society" after the collapse of the Empire saw in Count Ernst an entirely unpolitical personality, and no more than a charming guest, one of the most likeable of epicures—and the truest of brothers, watchful over his brother's reputation and position, discreetly keeping on the alert, and always ready to do anything to further Ulrich's interests. Often in telephoning to me he would explain with a laugh at the outset: "Rantzau speaking. Not the big brother, only the little one." And there was nothing either of irony or of affectation in this.

The two brothers were sometimes said to be almost indistinguishable, and there were various stories of absurd mistakes resulting; this, however, was a considerable exaggeration. But both had the same tastes, not only for cognac (much drinking of which had made Count Ernst a little hoarse, while it seemed only to have smoothed the vocal organs of his big brother), but in all matters of choice. They were alike in their passion for collecting antiques, and if the

Ambassador discovered anything special in Moscow it was generally sent to Berlin to the joint flat in Viktoriastrasse. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau died in September 1928, and Count Ernst lived on only long enough to put his dead brother's affairs in order and to assure his monument. He sought for a suitable biographer, and found in Herr Edgar Stern-Rubarth one who went to work with devotion and with more tact and discrimination than most. After that the count continued his existence mechanically, was out at dinner as before, almost every evening, and thought of the past, like the King of Thule in Goethe's poem, with every drop that trickled down his throat—until the day came when he could only go out accompanied by a physician, and a little later he died. He had really died on the day when the body of his twin brother was carried through the castle gate to the family vault, with the ceremonial solemnity of an aristocratic burial. Frédéric Cuvier, the brother of the famous naturalist, chose for his gravestone the inscription: "*Frédéric Cuvier, frère de Georges.*" If it had not been so against all rules in a nobleman's vault, Ernst Rantzau would certainly have wanted to be recorded on his tablet as "*Bruder Ulrichs.*"

Everybody knew about these twin brothers, and everybody knew of the close friendship between Count Brockdorff-Rantzau and M. Tchitcherin, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs. Ambassador and Commissar met in Moscow, and it must have been a case of love at first sight, so much did the two have in common, in spite of national differences, and so soon must they have discovered that affinity. It helped, though perhaps unconsciously, that Tchitcherin was himself of old family and had been an actor in a vast revolution—participating, of course, much more thoroughly, consistently, and unreservedly than the German count, who

never severed connexion with his past. But in Tchitcherin Brockdorff-Rantzau found what he needed—a statesman with whom he could discuss plans for the development of German-Russian relations, and could steer past the many troublesome and dangerous incidents; he also found a witty bohemian intellectual with a mixture of revolutionary faith and philosophical scepticism, a keen man of action and a Diogenes with something good in his tub, a shrewd diplomat and a jolly companion, himself a smoker of innumerable cigarettes and not averse to the little glasses. I do not know whether the two often discussed the German literature of the romantic period, of which this Russian Commissar knew more than most German university men; probably Brockdorff-Rantzau the art collector was even more interested in Tchitcherin's knowledge of European museums. I remember a conversation I once had with Tchitcherin. "Do you think," I asked him, "that the Revolution has actually changed the soul of the Russian?" He replied definitely and without a moment's hesitation—Yes, the Revolution had "made a clean cut" with the past. I objected that it would hardly be so easy to root out the very depths of the Russian nature, the men of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were likely to be still at bottom the men of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. He insisted with a decision that rather astonished me that the Russian of the past, the Russian soul of the past, had been absolutely rooted out and no longer existed. Did he mean it in all sincerity? In reality there was still a good deal of the Russian of the past in Tchitcherin himself.

But Brockdorff-Rantzau too, as he sat there with the Russian Foreign Commissar, or in Berlin with a friend or a casual visitor, was not, if one may say so, the whole man. The Brockdorff-Rantzau with whom we would sit wreathed

in cigarette smoke, exchanging gay and serious talk, chaff and graver matters, the Brockdorff-Rantzau who was a "great ambassador" and a romantic figure, with his delicate pallor, his sharply modelled falcon's head resting on the old-fashioned stand-up collar, his eyes now dreamily veiled, now clearly fixing their objective, his ceremonial courtesy, his frivolous irony, his sensitive pride, his ingratiating sweetness and aggressive bitterness, was only a part, only the foreground of his real self. The restorer who set to work on this portrait would find below the surface hidden features of a character as strong and archaically simple as the recumbent figure of some pious knight on an old tomb.

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau died on the evening of September 8th, 1928, in the comfort of his old home in Berlin, with its crowded collection of works of art. In the six years he had passed in Moscow he had become "the great ambassador"; his mental stature had grown in coping with his difficult and promising task, and while he was perhaps too much inclined to imagine that Moscow was the one and only point from which the world could be moved, this was the result of mental processes with which one could reason, of efforts at planning and systematizing, not merely of a diplomat's magnification of his own post. But while the spirit so grew in strength, the body was being exhausted. The count plunged into his work in Moscow with a furious energy that would have worn out the strongest frame. He never took exercise in the open air, and had no other relaxation, apart from his all-night talks with Tchitcherin, than the conversation with the guests whom he lavishly entertained. At times there would be an intelligent, stimulating visitor; often envious and arrogant inquisitors from Germany, or discontented business men. Every day a mass of troubles

and vexations, dumped on him by every courier from Berlin, presented to him by every intolerant act of the Soviet administration, every arbitrary ruling of the Soviet courts, had to be cleared away. He was urged to spare himself, but took no notice. The time came, however, when payment was exacted for this enormous expenditure of physical and nervous energy, in the form of hæmorrhages and a weakened heart. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau came back, seriously ill, to Annettenhöh. Then, against his doctor's urgent advice, he went to Berlin on official business, and there succumbed to a sickness no will-power could master. The days and hours before his death showed the real Brockdorff-Rantzau—those hours in which, almost up to the moment of loss of consciousness, he dictated, as a political last will and testament, his farewell messages to the German President and the Moscow Government; calmly read them over, amended them and signed them, and then smoked the last cigarette and passed away.

He died as one who needed no family tree and no coat of arms to establish his nobility. He is said to have said to his brother that he had died at Versailles, but we could well do without all these last words of such dubious historicity. Goethe's alleged "More light," for instance, probably conferred on posterity by some literary charwoman, is worse than the stuff on the graves in a Campo Santo. Morally steeled in physical decay, liberated in his last solitude from all the sensitivenesses that had worn him away, the knight of romance who was no romantic dreamer went out into the land of shadows. And just as though it were a less distant journey, he carried out the frontier formalities before he passed on.



On an evening in June, 1914, after the sailing regatta on the Lower Elbe, near Hamburg—the regular prelude to Kiel Week—the invited guests thronged the deck of the Hapag steamer *Auguste Viktoria*, smoking and chatting, stimulated by the fresh breeze blowing across the broad river. As always with Ballin and the Hapag as hosts, we had dined extremely well, and it had been noticed with pleasure that the Kaiser was particularly cheerful. There was no reason why he should not be, or the rest of us: it was impossible to foresee that a week later Franz Ferdinand would be assassinated, and that the world war would then break out. I was watching the Kaiser from a little distance as he explained some technical problem to an admiring group, when Ballin came up to me.

“Brockdorff-Rantzau,” he said, “is in the smoking room; he wants to meet you and I promised to take you to him.”

At this time Brockdorff-Rantzau was Minister at Copenhagen. Ballin was a friend of his and thought a great deal of him, and had often spoken of him to me. I went down to the smoking room, where Brockdorff-Rantzau had retired out of the crowd. Until then I had only seen him at a distance, and now he looked younger than ever. Forty-five is not a great age for a Minister of Legation, and is about the prime of life for any man, but the count might have been younger, only showing some traces of strain. When we had been introduced I asked him, pointing to the boat deck, why he was down here like a hermit in the wilderness, with all the life up above round His Majesty. He replied with the question whether I preferred that myself, and added some sardonic remark about the proceedings on deck. If he respected the crown, he plainly had little liking for its wearer. One’s attitude to the Kaiser was, of course, a question not

merely of political intelligence but also of taste, and there were many things that were more than Count Brockdorff-Rantzau's taste could endure. We spoke a little about Russia and about the international situation. So far as I remember, he revealed no more of the seer's gift than any other of us: there was no Cassandra on board.

I saw him from time to time during the war, though not very often. He was doing work of great importance in Copenhagen in procuring supplies of foodstuffs and raw materials for Germany, and was already showing that he was concerned only for results, and no more interested in catch-words and conformities than a sea eagle plunging down after a fish is interested in a picturesque sunset. He was on excellent terms with the Socialist Government of Denmark, and chose most of his helpers and intermediaries from among the German Social Democrats, whose association with Danish party comrades was valuable to him. He did not shrink from dealing with men who were in politics for business reasons if they were capable and helpful, like the rich and pleasure-loving Parvus Helphand, a Maecenas to alleged enemies of the State who really were full of good citizenship and very moderate in their views; and he did not fear for his soul like an old maid if he was brought into touch with persons of less than the highest morality. He disapproved of the unrestricted submarine campaign, but it is not clear whether he was among those who gave energetic warnings against it. In after-years the people who had "always protested" against every mistake made during the war were as innumerable as those who claimed in the early years of the French Revolution to have taken part in the storming of the Bastille. On the other hand, it is an undeniable fact that at the beginning of 1918 Brockdorff-Rantzau took to Berlin an offer

from the King of Denmark to discuss with England the possibility of peace, and that all the reply he was permitted to give the well-meaning king was that "Germany has no objection in principle to such a step as the king has in mind"—on which, of course, the king no longer felt any inclination to intervene, and the war went on to its inevitable end.

There was a great deal of intrigue in Berlin against the Minister at Copenhagen, first because the patriots of the first water regarded him as too pro-Danish, and secondly because he had retained for so long a desirable post which many would have liked to have. I have mentioned how creatures of the baser sort tried to destroy him by scandal. He first called on me during the war to thank me for my success in ridding him of a persecutor of this type. On a later occasion, on November 4, 1917—immediately after Baron von Hertling had accepted the succession to the Chancellorship after the ill-starred Michaelis—I found him unusually depressed when he came to see me. There was nothing left even of his sarcasm, which could usually sweep away his ill-humour like a strong gust of fresh air. At the outbreak of this crisis he had hoped that he would be offered, if not the post of Chancellor, at least that of Foreign Secretary, and he had been entirely passed over. I told him that I should be glad to support his candidature for the Foreign Secretaryship to the extent of my small powers, but only if Kühlmann (who actually became Foreign Secretary) had no prospect of the post or declined it. He replied that Kühlmann was a friend of his; he had actually been the witness to Kühlmann's marriage, and had no desire whatever to compete with him. I pointed out further that he was too little known to those parties who now had the say in the appointment; apart from a few Conservative

Members of Parliament who were of his own social rank, he was closely acquainted only with a few Social Democrats, through his business in Copenhagen. He admitted this, but said that he had also come into touch with some of the *Freisinnige*. He had also just met Ebert, in Hertling's ante-room, and had had a very pleasant talk with him. His almost naïve expression of his ambition might have been open to criticism if it had been nothing more than ambition for promotion. But it was ambition for action, the desire of a confident and impulsive nature to enter the battlefield at the moment of extreme peril. And it was an ambition that shone all the more brightly when one thought of all the officials who had been comfortably and respectably climbing up in the official hierarchy out of "sense of duty," and of that tired old man Hertling, who now added the Chancellorship to all the distinctions and posts of honour he had already collected, as though just to crown his career, just one more star or chain for his Order of the Black Eagle, one more wreath for his coffin.

Exactly a month after the outbreak of the Revolution the Republican Government offered Brockdorff-Rantzau the Foreign Secretaryship and asked him to come from Copenhagen to Berlin to discuss matters. He drew up a memorandum in which he set forth the conditions that seemed to him to be essential for the conduct of the country's foreign policy—energetic action against Bolshevism, the establishment and defence of the authority of the State, an early convocation of the National Assembly, and a social programme which should fulfil the aspirations of the working class ex-combatants so far as was possible without imperilling the national credit. How these social aspirations and the interests of the employers could be reconciled with one

another was a question the writer of the memorandum was no better able to answer than anyone else who wants to make an omelette without breaking eggs. The principal thing at the moment—and for a Foreign Minister—was that if the peace terms should prove to be intolerable they should be rejected, he should refuse to sign them. The Social Democratic People's Commissaries stated that they agreed to all this, and Brockdorff-Rantzau accepted office. Without doubt he had been feverishly hoping for this reply from them, permitting him to enter on a great historic task, and to enter on it with dignity, and he would have been very unhappy if it had been felt in Berlin that a less exacting candidate would perhaps be preferable.

On November 29th, 1918, I had gone to see Solf at his home: he was then still Minister (or, as the title then was, Secretary) for Foreign Affairs. He had asked me to see him as he wanted to tell me how things had gone on at the very agitated Conference of Ministers that had just been held. I knew that Eisner, with the ferocious rhetoric of the great orators of the French Revolution, had demanded Solf's immediate dismissal, and that he had had the support, as a matter of course, of the Supreme Executive Council, which was still feared and, like most gods, regarded itself as eternal. Solf, however, was in very good humour, and showed a sense of security which, in face of the plainly menacing signs, I found it difficult to comprehend. He praised Ebert, who had just been with him; as for Hugo Haase, the leader of the Independents in the Cabinet of People's Commissaries, he considered him "loathsome." During his speech at the Conference Kurt Eisner, who sat next him, had continually heckled him.

Solf, like myself, was afraid that there would be a dictated

peace, with very harsh terms. He did not intend to go to Versailles for the whole period of the negotiations, but only for the opening sitting; he told me he had thought of Count Bernstorff as head of the German delegation. All this he said with the optimism he was able to preserve up to the last moment, since he was left in ignorance of the intention to throw him overboard even when his successor, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, was actually on his way to Berlin.

Before I left, Solf showed me the letter of abdication which Count Ernst Rantzau had just brought from Holland with the Kaiser's signature. It was a large sheet of paper with the embossed eagle. The text of the abdication was typed, and the document differed in this respect from all earlier documents of similar princely abnegation in European archives. William II had signed with a firmness that looked rather as if it was deliberate—in big lettering, with thick downstrokes, and with flourishes underneath that would have graced a table decoration at a banquet.

Three weeks later, on December 18th, Count Ernst telephoned to me that his "big brother" had just arrived and wanted to see me, in their flat in the Viktoriastrasse. I found Brockdorff-Rantzau full of the importance of the moment, but doing his best to seem calm and cool, though scarcely with success. He told me the conditions he had laid down for his acceptance of office, and seemed to be interested to learn what I thought of them, although his mind was entirely made up already. He had not only demanded absolute independence in the conduct of his office but also the right to the final say in regard to the composition of the peace delegation. I said I agreed with all this, but considered that the Government was very weak, so that it was impossible to place absolute reliance in its acceptance

of his conditions, honest though the intention undoubtedly was. Brockdorff himself, I added, would no doubt be declared abroad to be a man of the old régime, a junker, an imperialist, and he would be unable to count on any particularly friendly reception—though, indeed, that would probably be just as true of anybody else. He must have found me less enthusiastic than he expected, but took the little douche with a good grace: it was all quite true, but he could not draw back now, he had already committed himself to Ebert and Haase, and his conditions had been accepted; he could only have withdrawn if they had not been. At all events, I seemed to be about the only man here who did not take up the standpoint that there was nothing more to be done and we must throw up the sponge. I replied that people who throw up the sponge at once when things go badly are best out of any political struggle.

We went on to speak of the coming peace negotiations, and entirely agreed that if the conditions were beyond all reason, they must be rejected. We should see then whether the Allies would march into Germany, and how long the Entente Governments would consider it advisable to let their war-weary troops be in touch with a semi-Bolshevist population. There came up from the street the sound of passing lorries with men marching alongside them. It was a train of baggage accompanied by troops; women and children were sitting on the lorries, with garlands and little flags as signs of rejoicing at the return home; the whole thing was rather pitiful. Brockdorff-Rantzau wanted to see nothing of it, and we hurriedly pulled the curtains across the window.

Two days later Count Bernstorff sent a message that he would like to talk to me. I met him in the Hotel Adlon, and

he told me that he had withdrawn his candidature for the National Assembly, since he was taking over the leadership of the peace delegation. Solf had entrusted him with this mission, and Count Brockdorff-Rantzau had told him that he intended himself to direct matters from Berlin and would not go to the negotiations. Bernstorff was beyond question an exceptionally able and efficient diplomat, but he knew that, after his unpleasant experiences in America, I did not regard him as the right man to lead the delegation; and it was plain that he noticed my surprise at his news. He said a little hesitatingly: "We have been at work, of course, for a long time at the Foreign Ministry in preparation for this; we have been working long hours every day at it."

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau had said that he had committed himself to Ebert and Haase, and this meant that not only the Majority Socialists but the Independents, led by Hugo Haase, had agreed to his appointment. Were it not that in his case it was sometimes just the unexpected that was most likely to happen, it might have given food for wonder that, quite apart from his liking for Ebert, he continued to maintain excellent relations with these radicals. It was always being said that they crowded his ante-room. That was not quite true, but relations were actively cultivated on both sides, until at the critical moment the Independents left him in the lurch, and ostracized him, as though they had suddenly discovered him to be a villain of the deepest dye. Probably he had imagined that he would be able to win them over by treating them tenderly, while, in their hatred of the Majority Socialists, they had felt drawn to this new arrival on the scene, aristocrat though he was: at least he was not a competitor, not in rivalry with them for the soul of the proletariat. As for Brockdorff-Rantzau,



his whole political philosophy was confined within the bounds of a moderate and well-ordered democracy, and his interest in plans of socialization was merely that of a well-intentioned amateur. His courtship of the more radical spirits was merely one more of the little political flirtations of which he was fond.

Among the People's Commissaries there was a fairly general liking for him, and a measure of gratitude; but the first contact must have been a strange experience, for the last remaining centaur cannot have seemed more out of place in the streets of a city than would this cavalier with the face and the figure, the bearing and the manners of the *ancien régime* among the middle-class men, the good honest souls of the lower middle class, into whose midst he had come. The old leaders of the German Social Democracy, Bebel, Auer, von Vollmar, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Singer, had acquired a measure of authority and impressiveness through their intellectual labours, or their long management of the party councils; but there was nothing of this in the new generation, and in their narrow circumstances at that time the very pearl in the tiepin of their strange colleague must have been noticeable. He himself found his level with ease; he showed, at all events, no visible constraint; his whole behaviour dispelled all doubt of his democratic feeling and his close community with the working masses. He brought into play all his arts, great and little, of pleasing and impressing: grave dignity or sharp decision alternated with gay humour, amusing conversation, comradely heartiness. During the street fighting he showed his solidarity with the besieged People's Commissars in various ways: one was to offer up to them a cheerful libation in the form of a venerable bottle of cognac brought from the Viktoriastrasse.

He did not abandon his aristocratic style, but he displayed it only at moments when it made its appearance not as an inheritance but in the form of a statesmanly exercise of will-power. It may be fairly confidently assumed that before his first appearance he carefully studied every detail of tone and mien and gesture, his twin brother Ernst more or less fulfilling the rôle of the theatre "mother" who casts a final critical glance over her darling, with a careful eye to everything, in the dressing-room. But no one was less of a play-actor, more conscientious, or more instinctively correct, than he as a Republican Minister and subsequently a Republican Ambassador. Once he had taken the decisive step he never cast a glance backwards, never looked round, as so many others did, for a back door and a secret path of escape in emergency.

There was the same absolute sincerity in the liking he very soon felt for Ebert. In his most intimate conversations, when he spoke with the utmost freedom, a genuine warmth would come into his voice when he spoke of Ebert, evidencing something more than a simple recognition of his qualities. It was a feeling fully reciprocated by Ebert, who had the warmest appreciation of Brockdorff-Rantzau's collaboration. Ebert was not always happy in his choice of persons; the elegant sureness of a man of the world, the externals of a social stratum that regarded itself as superior were capable at times of influencing him too greatly, or at all events he was too ready to assume that their owner could be of service. He was anxious, moreover, to avoid the appearance of a persistent, narrow partisanship. Thus the day came when he sounded us all about Herr Cuno, the head of the Hapag, as a possible Foreign Minister in succession to the murdered Rathenau. Pretty well all of us objected; Ebert nevertheless

actually made Cuno Chancellor, though he had never before held office. Cuno was a courteous and honourable man, a tall Hamburger, but he was simply the representative of the conservative big capitalists.

Ebert's attraction to Brockdorff-Rantzau cannot be counted among these misjudgments. In this case he came under the influence not only of external charm but of intrinsic qualities. Besides, Ebert had read and learned a great deal, and was familiar with the history of the French Revolution. Was it not an interesting coincidence that the German popular government had a Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, just as the Constituent Assembly had its Comte de Mirabeau? Count Brockdorff-Rantzau was, indeed, no Mirabeau, and as, with all his self-confidence, he was sufficiently severe in the exercise of self-criticism, he would have given the right answer to any flatterers who had coupled that name with his own. He had neither the cyclopean stature nor the pock-marks nor the mane of hair nor the "vices" of Mirabeau; but neither had he the boundless creative energy, which no imprisonment could tame, of that volcanic genius. Of Mirabeau's impassioned and inspiring oratory he had not a trace. Even allowing for the tendency to undue magnification of figures who have grown historic, the two are not comparable. And Count Brockdorff-Rantzau did not, like Count Mirabeau, play a prominent part in the revolutionary drama—quite apart from the fact that what was called the German Revolution was not impressive as drama. Brockdorff-Rantzau came to the fore with the rest through the Revolution, he accepted its principles, he placed himself in its service, and he also demanded a share in its supervision; but he had no deep interest in it; it was not his concern, his mission, to organize and build up the actual

framework of the State. To defend the State against the outer world, against the imminent menace of the peace terms—that was his concern, his mission, his passion.

Some people have imagined that he must have suffered from divided allegiances—aristocrat and servant of the Revolution, brought up under the old traditions and now cut off from his natural environment. His brother Ernst was still adviser to William II, though far away now from the emigrant court. His Aunt Brockdorff, for whom he always showed the utmost respect, had been a tireless controller of the royal household as Mistress of the Robes to the Kaiserin. Could Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, as a Minister of the Republic, fail to be divided in his soul, a Werther of politics? For my part, I had not the impression that he suffered excessively from any such inward conflict. His independence of spirit, his resolution, his wholeheartedness, his forward look and strength of purpose, saved him from it. He had always been intellectually and emotionally out of sympathy with William II, and the fall of the monarchy with the monarch seemed to him, on a long view, to be merely one of the many stages in the progress of world history, and to matter far less at the moment than the fate of his country and people. The portraits of his ancestors could hardly call him to account, for those ancestors had fought for such a variety of sacred causes in their day. And he himself, in turning away from past to present, was fighting in the nation's camp, and purely for his nation. He had had little contact with the Prussian junkers; only rare exceptions among them had interested him. Most of them, indeed, bore him no ill-will for going over to the Republic; if they condemned him they did so merely for the sake of appearances; in reality they were not sorry to see him there: in the fact

that a nobleman of old family belonged to the Government, even if he were an eccentric, fraternizing with the mob, they saw a guarantee of their possessions. On one occasion, when speaking in the National Assembly at Weimar, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau thought it necessary to assure suspicious members on the Left that it was possible to be a count and still a democrat. There was no real necessity, and the declaration was a little unfortunate, but it was nothing more than a piece of rhetoric, it had nothing to do with any inner uncertainties. Of these he had none—even if he had had time for them, and he had not.

Stern-Rubarth, somewhere in his biography, describes the count as working like a man "possessed." It is the exact word. Brockdorff-Rantzau was filled, to the point of obsession, with the thought of any political task ahead of him, or in which he was engaged. He was entirely mastered by this inward urge, and ruthlessly expended his strength and his vitality in the pursuit of his purpose. In conversation he would explore people's minds for anything helpful or suggestive bearing on his concern of the moment. This concentration on a definite point might help him to success, but was also capable of narrowing his range and so hindering him. Too systematic thinking along one path may lead to missing another. And it is more likely to produce a great ambassador than a statesman, who must survey the whole horizon and be able to manœuvre on all sides. In Moscow Count Brockdorff-Rantzau was a really great ambassador; but at times he had disagreed with the policy of the Berlin Government, which, from its central look-out, could appreciate the extraordinary importance of the East, but was being frequently and rudely reminded that there were also three other cardinal points. Had he been longer in that

central position in Berlin and responsible for the whole field of foreign policy, he would certainly have acquired the capacity to hold several strings at once and to restrain his own eagerness; but the gain in ripe statesmanship would perhaps have been offset by loss in personality. Three elements controlled his whole nature—the fanatical will of the man “possessed,” the lofty fastidiousness of the solitary, and the faith that gives strength and confidence but, unlike the political will, sets itself no definite goals. There were some who would as soon have followed Brockdorff-Rantzau as a will-o’-the-wisp. Others sensed his spiritual depths and loved him for his faith, his solitariness, and his capacity of engrossment, of “possession.”

I often saw him in the months that preceded his journey to Versailles. We were at one in considering that there could be no signing a peace treaty of the character indicated by the rumours and prophecies and hints that were floating about, and in the fellowship of struggle our past pleasant relationship grew into cordial friendship. He asked me to give him my support and to hold off his opponents, especially Erzberger, who had been watching from the first for every opportunity of tripping him up. Although my support was given not really to him personally but to our common cause, he was full of gratitude to the end of his life, and I think there was sincere feeling at the back of the flatteries to which he treated me—as was his wont. It was obvious to us that peace terms that would arbitrarily dismember a country, would place a great nation in chains for a period of many years, would rob it of essential sources of supplies, and would thus inflict wounds that would be sensitive for all time, were utterly wrong, and that their wrongness must be exposed. They outraged every natural feeling and also every dictate

of political common sense. The German Republic was already bearing the burden of the armistice conditions. If in addition it accepted a peace treaty of the utmost frightfulness, it would be burdened from its birth with an incurable malady—like the Oswald of Ibsen's *Ghosts*, who suffered for his father's sins. Countless soldiers in the trenches on both sides were filled with the thought—there was evidence enough of it in their talk and their letters—that this terrible war would be followed by the great appeasement between Germany and France, and that their sacrifice would not be entirely in vain. From their bones there would rise not the Avenger but, at last, the spirit of harmony and fraternity. These were idealist dreams in the pauses between the hellish onslaughts, dreamed by heroic youths destined to fall victims to a shell or a bayonet or poison gas. But even sober politicians had hoped for a peace of which it would be possible to say that in it reason had won the victory, whoever won on the battlefield. Those who during the years of war had been noisy and unscrupulous advocates of annexation, of the subjection of unwilling populations, and of contempt for the innate rights of man, were not likely to be listened to seriously now when they began to advocate justice and morality. But those whose sense of right had not been twisted and dislocated were entitled to make their indignant protest.

Even when I tried to see things from the enemy standpoint, from that of the interests of France and the rest, it seemed to me that a peace treaty that cut deep into the body and soul of the German nation was a senseless and ghastly mistake. For how long was it imagined that the hoped-for results of an annihilating peace would last? If, as many people were demanding, Germany were partitioned,

the south separated from the north, or all the petty states of the past brought back to life, there would in the long run be no rest but only an incurable unrest, a smouldering peril that would soon flare up again. It would not be so easy to tear apart a nation which after prolonged struggles had achieved unity and learned to value it: everywhere, in underground conspiracies or open risings, the struggles for unity would begin again. Was it proposed to maintain an Allied army in each of the German states, and to place the whole country under a police régime, as Austria once did in Italy? Even this would achieve nothing; the more spies and eavesdroppers were installed, the more active would be the resistance and the graver the threat to the peace of Europe. I remember saying at this time to the correspondent of a great French newspaper:

“There are really only two conceivable courses. Either you must chop Germany to bits, smash her, disarm her for at least a hundred years, or you must bind her to you with a treaty of friendship, and so achieve the security and the strength of position you need and justly claim. And as you cannot destroy Germany, for she would come to life again, clear and cool reflection should deter you from blocking the way to friendship, to an entente, by insane conditions of peace.”

It may be hoped that there will not be another war, but if such a disaster should again come upon us, the victor, whoever he might be, would once more have only the choice between the promptings of passion and the injunctions of reason. Each time the passions would be more furious and formidable, but each time any reflection that took account of realities and avoided the pitfalls even of justified hate must of necessity give the same warning.



We were well aware that an attempt to produce hesitation and doubt in part of the enemy camp, and to destroy its unity, by refusing to sign the peace treaty, would be a very doubtful and dangerous enterprise. But it was a heroic expedient of which the risk had to be taken, and the prospect of its success would probably have seemed to be greater if we had had information at the time of the course of events at the Paris Conference, which was becoming so like the camps of the quarrelling kings in front of Troy. Ten years later I asked Mr. Lloyd George, over dinner at Churt:

"What would have happened if we had not signed?"

He replied, with a knowing smile:

"Germany should not have accepted the armistice conditions."

Then, moving his hands to and fro over the table, he developed the strategic plan of retreat which the Germans should have carried out, until they halted beyond the Rhine. He assured me that if this had happened he would have returned to England and told the nation that the war had lasted long enough, the victory had been won, and he was unable to see the necessity or the use of continuing this sanguinary and exhausting struggle on German soil. This would undoubtedly have been the general opinion; he would have carried the nation with him, and France would have had either to go on fighting alone or to content herself with a more reasonable peace.

All this, represented in Mr. Lloyd George's lively and confident way, seemed extraordinarily enlightening. However, the conclusion of the Armistice was the result of telegraphic instructions from the German High Command, and ultimately from Hindenburg himself. When I went on to ask what would have happened if the peace treaty had

been rejected, my resourceful host himself retired, as he had unfortunately been unable to recommend the Germans to do while there was still time, to a defensive position behind a Rhine of his own.

Needless to say, a declaration that an intolerable treaty would not be signed could only make an impression, and influence the attitude of the enemy Powers, if it was clear that it had behind it a united nation and the firm will of all political parties associated in the decision. The governments of the Entente Powers sent agents and observers to Berlin, to feel the pulse of the nation and especially of its spokesmen, parliamentarians and publicists, and every day these physicians, after ascertaining the condition of the patients, gave them a spoonful of soothing syrup with a word of encouragement: let the patient just sign the peace conditions—a pure formality—and there would be a vast change for the better; all the world would be anxious to help him, and he would soon recover perfect health. These humane envoys were well received by Erzberger and his friends, by certain Socialists who were a little more radical even than the Independent Party leaders, and by various persons whose convictions were as easily changed as gramophone records. Above all, men like Maximilian Harden, who had been the loudest shouters for war, now put on the white garb of innocence, declaring that “We alone are the true pacifists,” and summoning the rest (who had less than they to expiate) to repentance. While these new friends of peace, who made up by noisiness for their belated arrival, were assuring the agents of the Allies that Germany would quite certainly sign any treaty that was put before her, all the genuine representatives of the pacifist organizations, men like Schücking and Quidde, and also those diplomats who, like

Lichnowsky, stood farthest removed from the Nationalists, were for determined resistance to conditions which would bring not the hoped-for peace of the world but a continuance of poisoned relations and international hatred and discord. They saw no sense in building a palace of peace on top of a volcano.

Most of the gentlemen who came to Berlin to create a feeling in favour of signing the treaty had been very cleverly chosen. Those selected were almost exclusively persons who had lived in Berlin before the war, had been in touch in those days with political circles, and had always been accounted friends of Germany or at least supporters of the idea of international understanding. The most versatile of all of them was Professor Haguenin, who travelled in French propaganda. He was a persuasive and ingratiating advocate, and held something in hand to tempt everybody. He was not absolutely insincere; he would have preferred a peace that contained the elements of reconciliation, if only because he himself would be glad to be on good terms again with the Germans; and if he did not always believe everything he said he would always have liked to believe it. He made his first visit to me at the end of March, 1919. I told him at once that he must not expect to get from me the encouragement that I knew he had had in other quarters: I remained what I always had been, an opponent of every sort of nationalism, every policy of violence, every departure from justice, no matter whether it came from our side or, as now, from the other. He was full of regret for the mistaken course that had been entered on in Paris, but everything was still regarded there in a military instead of a political light; they were suspicious of Germany, regarded her as very strong and very wily, and considered that we had only invented

the Republic and the bogeys of Bolshevism and starvation in order to deceive the other Powers—it was all “camouflage.” He knew that the Americans and the British were saying in Berlin that “it is all the fault of the French,” but in Paris the Americans especially were saying that they must leave it to France to settle with Germany, it did not concern America. He regarded it as a mistaken policy to try to take away as much as possible of Germany’s territory and reduce her to impotence, and the French idea of getting hundreds of milliards out of her was ridiculous. But he had to send a report now to Clemenceau and really did not know what to write—it was all very complicated, and Clemenceau always wanted everything put simply, almost with rudimentary simplicity. I replied that in that case he need only report the perfectly simple fact that Germany was determined to reject intolerable conditions. And it was, I added, quite a simple fact after all that if a *Gewaltfriede* were imposed on Germany, a peace that was an act of violence, the only result of it would be to bring the nationalist reaction back into power in Germany. Professor Haguenin complained also of Tardieu, saying that he knew nothing of Europe and was much worse than Clemenceau. Haguenin was very melancholy, very pessimistic, very distressed.

He came again to see me at the end of May; the peace terms had by then been made public. He took from his pocket three letters he had received from Paris; he read bits from them and even allowed me to read parts of them. A high official of the Quai d’Orsay, whose name he gave me, wrote that France was pursuing a mistaken policy; many people realized it and appreciated the necessity of resuming relations with Germany, but Clemenceau would listen to no objections; as for the rest—“What can you expect? Spring

in Paris is lovely, the women are elegant and showing their pretty legs, nobody wants to be bothered; people say to themselves: 'They will sign all right, and if they don't Foch will soon do the needful.' " They were not reflecting, said the writer, that that might not be so easy. The other two letters, both, of course, like the first one in not being meant for consumption in Berlin, were written in a similar tone. "*Pour la beauté de la chose*," said Haguenin, "I could almost wish that the people who have so gone off the lines might be given a lesson and that Germany would really refuse to sign, but I do not think you can do that. It seems to me out of the question; Foch would go ruthlessly to work, the military would have the say once more, Germany would be unable to hold out. My impression is that they are hesitating here and beginning to make up their minds to sign."

I assured him that he was in error, the present Government would not accept a treaty of this sort, and the only possibility was that a new Cabinet, formed by the radical Independents, with Erzberger and a few outsiders, might sign; but they would have no one at their back, and would disappear again before the ink of their signature was dry.

It was becoming likely that the German resistance would break down, and in case this should happen I tried to persuade leading people of the need for tactics of this sort, which would have been very unwelcome to the Allies. Later on Professor Haguenin showed me bits of a report which he assured me he had sent to Clemenceau, and which it was to be hoped had reached its destination intact.

Far less artistic than Professor Haguenin in carrying out his mission was Mr. Dresel, the American Minister, who had been on the staff of the Embassy in Berlin before the war. He was normally as entirely courteous as the Professor; but

as he came into my room, with a silent, smiling companion, he said rather aggressively that he was unable to conceive, having known me for so long, how I could think of trying to prevent the Germans from signing, and asked whether I felt able to take such a responsibility upon myself. I replied that my responsibility seemed to me to be less grave than that of the people who were trying to force this treaty on us; and our dispute continued for a time in this spirit. Suddenly my telephone bell rang. I lifted the receiver and heard Brockdorff-Rantzau's voice: he wanted to speak to me, and started talking at once. Mr. Dresel and his silently smiling companion looked a little too inquisitively at the instrument, and as I felt it inadvisable to let them get on to the right track I shouted into the receiver that I could not be disturbed, I was busy. Brockdorff-Rantzau understood at once and rang off. Afterwards he amused himself by affecting to be huffy, and declaring that I had treated him abominably, and had taken advantage of the situation to be horribly rude to him. It had put him, he said, in much the same case as that king of France who, at a masked ball, made arrangements with his Lord Chamberlain to prevent being recognized. To heighten his disguise, the Chamberlain was to give him a good beating. It was so good that the king yelled: "Too much disguise!"

The National Assembly had begun its sittings in February. On the opening day, February 6th, 1919, Weimar was a wintry idyll. The theatre in which the Assembly met was filled with flowers as at a modest middle-class wedding. But that exhausted the idyllic, wedding element. Members and journalists, and those persons who had come to Weimar because they considered that they were indispensable, met together in the hotel lounges and the restaurants, and each

clique and each *Stammtisch* entrenched itself against the clique or *Stammtisch* next to it. It very soon became evident that there was no prospect whatever of national unity: particularist feelings and provincial loyalties overruled everything else. It also became evident at once that something like a general scramble was already going on for places in the Government. Party jealousies and personal ambitions were being exhibited sometimes without the slightest compunction. There was the office of President of the Assembly to fill; the Social Democrats wanted it for their Herr David, and the Centre for their Fehrenbach, and there were the sixteen ministerial portfolios to distribute, eight among the Social Democrats and four each among the Democrats and the Centre.

On the morning before the opening day I had a visit from Herr Fischbeck, the leader of the Democrats. We frequently disagreed, but I regarded him as much abler than the Party's great orator and apostle, Friedrich Naumann. Herr Fischbeck wanted me to go to Brockdorff-Rantzau and ask him whether he would not join the Democratic "fraction" (parliamentary group). He would then count as one of their four Ministers, and this would help to solve their problem. Otherwise the Democrats would only be allowed three portfolios, and would thus be behind the Centre. Next day I went to see Brockdorff-Rantzau at the Palace, where he had a study looking out on the park, with very fine old furniture: the room was pleasantly warm on this winter day, with the snow-covered landscape outside. He told me that he had no intention of joining any party, and gave his reasons. The Foreign Minister should remain neutral, preserving continuity, and should not be involved with the rest in every Cabinet crisis. I agreed with that view, and said

so. He added that he was unable to support every point in the Democratic party programme. In some questions, the question, for instance, of socialization, he went beyond it. On this day he was in excellent spirits, very happy in his task and his office; there was much less sign of the nervous and "decadent" traits in his character; he was full of energy and self-confidence and eager for the fray. He seemed ready to outdo Orpheus, the tamer and charmer of animals.

On February 12th Ebert was elected President of the German Republic. On the 14th Brockdorff-Rantzau made his speech in the National Assembly; I went back to Berlin immediately after it. He read the speech without looking up from his manuscript, rather monotonously and quite without any oratorical gift. The speech was one of those sensible, carefully considered, neatly finished programme statements which deserve respectful reception without being in any way epoch-making. It was a pity that this man who could be so captivating in private intercourse, and who was always interesting even when one was annoyed with him or critical of him, should lose so much of his spell in the face of a big assembly. His temperament, his sparkle and originality could only be brought into play in a small circle; on an official occasion, in public, his feeling of responsibility and of the importance of the moment crushed out his individuality and left nothing but a lifeless shell—just as the gods of Olympus, when they come back from a private expedition to their existence in the skies, become no more than models for an Academician. Even here, of course, in an environment that offered little of interest to the observer, this tall, lean, rather formal and over-courtly figure could not fail to be striking.

Back in Berlin, Brockdorff-Rantzau and his assistants in



the Foreign Ministry worked until late at night. Immense masses of material were accumulated on every question that could conceivably arise in connexion with the peace treaty. Population statistics, commercial statistics, industry, shipping, finance, army and navy, colonies, European geography, national and ethnical groupings and distinctions, social problems, international law, German history, world history—all this and much else was hunted up and compiled and made intelligible for foreigners. Maps were made and tables drawn up. The expert demonstrated his indispensability. It could only be hoped that all this immense industry, which had produced a whole encyclopædia, would prove fruitful, and that the vast mass of argument would find opportunity of service in discussions at a round table, and was not destined to fall to dust in an official record room. Involuntarily I recalled another picture—that of *Geheimrat* Kriege, the law officer of the Foreign Ministry, in the Customs hall on the Dutch frontier, carefully going over the enormous mass of cases of documents with which he had protected himself against anything that might turn up at the second Hague Peace Conference. Once again there had been great achievements in thorough and methodical work, and even if it was all a little remote from politics, the effort to be armed against any eventuality was surely worthy of praise.

What was less admirable was the insistence of countless persons that they must be members of the peace delegation, or be included in one or other of its accompanying committees or sub-committees, and who moved heaven and earth to get squeezed in, if only in the luggage van. I asked Count Brockdorff-Rantzau whether he meant to go to Versailles looking like a Cook's guide with a vast following of tourists. There was something almost comic in his despairing reply

that I could have no idea of the mass of people he had already shaken off, and every one of them would remain behind to curse him and poison his reputation. This rush to serve the common weal by getting a free ticket for a distinguished visitors' box had long been one of the customs of the country. Many a seeker after fame would have been gratified by the announcement that he was "noticed among those present"—even present in the triumphal procession of a victorious enemy.

There were, of course, also men of real worth among those who were to accompany Count Brockdorff-Rantzau. And, after all, there had to be a "delegation," and experts who could be consulted; and the presence of Ministers representing the various government parties was evidence of unity. It was a pity, perhaps, that Brockdorff-Rantzau could not have come before the assembly of the Allies alone, or at least with a following less reminiscent of the famous burghers of Calais. Yet it was impossible, especially after our experience at Weimar, to suppose that the count would greatly impress the assembly or awaken its sympathy, and no doubt the ironic whisper would go round that this German Republic had evidently been determined to send its finest specimen of a junker. However, the first impression mattered little—nothing could avail if the moment of the handing over of the peace terms was not to be followed by long hours of negotiation. In those conversations to follow, in negotiation with individuals, Brockdorff-Rantzau would have been just as completely unembarrassed, would have shown just as much alertness, just as much sureness of stroke and versatility, and above all just as much tenacity and dæmonic "possession," as later in his conversations with Tchitcherin, and at every interview which was not attended by some

hundreds of persons, with stenographers and photographers and cine-cameramen. On closer acquaintance he would have been found interesting, it would have been recognized that he was something more than a mere "junker," and probably the conversation in Paris drawing-rooms would have been more busily concerned with him than with many other Conference figures. There might have been hesitation to extend sympathy to him, but he would at least have been respected.

And where in Germany was the perfect, ideal spokesman who could have been sent in Count Brockdorff-Rantzau's place? Best of all, of course, would have been an imposing man of the people, imposing by virtue of a strong and sterling character, of an eloquence that could carry away his audience, of his democratic outlook and unshakable convictions, his personal distinction and distinguished political record; but no such man had come to the fore in Germany. Walter Rathenau had been in favour of the *levée en masse*, and it was certainly as well that he was out of the question; still less could such men as Stresemann be considered: they had been compromised by their advocacy of annexations, their enthusiasm for the U-boats, and their foolish belittling of the Americans. There remained one man, again one of the old régime—Bülow. His grave errors belonged already to a relatively distant past, to the period of the first Moroccan crisis and the annexation of Bosnia. He was not exactly a model of faithfulness to convictions, or a perfect representative of a democratic Germany; but he was a gifted orator and a ready debater, he had his place in the gallery of European statesmen, and he knew everyone in the diplomatic world and was skilled in the artifices and conventions of diplomacy. For a time, so long as he was still able to

believe that the outcome of the war would not be absolutely disastrous, he had rather coveted appointment as the negotiator of the peace. He was fond of historical reminiscences, and probably imagined himself playing some such part as that of Talleyrand at the Congress of Vienna, or that of Thiers at Versailles—assuming, of course, that he would not be compelled, as Thiers was by Bismarck, to go as a suppliant to an all-powerful conqueror. Little Thiers himself was no radiant figure of selflessness, no martyr for the faith that was in him; he, too, had long been a connoisseur of adventurous foreign policies and then a belated warning voice, and he, too, embodied a past epoch, even three epochs or four. He had, of course, written and published the history of the Consulate and the Empire in many volumes, and Prince Bülow had not yet got as far as that with the history of William II and his empire. However, Bülow probably felt that he would meet with much the same reception: he could talk just as amusingly as the little old Frenchman, and there would be the same sort of conversations over meals with the Allied statesmen as at Versailles in February, 1871, at Bismarck's table—preceded, at the news of his impending arrival, by some such phrases as the first Chancellor's when he learned that Thiers had arrived: "He is a man of the sort one always receives." But the time came when it began to be doubtful whether the Allies would have a proper sense of what was due, or the sense of the historic that inspired Bismarck on such occasions; and the real situation grew steadily plainer. In those days Prince Bülow no longer coveted the appointment.

I next visited Brockdorff-Rantzau in Berlin on March 7th. It was a time of general strikes in Berlin; six hundred of the troops loyal to the Government had been surrounded in the

police headquarters in Alexanderplatz by Spartacist sailors and soldiers, and fighting was going on with guns and trench mortars. Brockdorff-Rantzau considered the strategic situation—in Alexanderplatz—to be better than the political situation in Wilhelmstrasse, and he wanted to see Scheidemann thrown overboard. We discussed possible successors to Scheidemann, but could discover no one adequate for the post in the ranks of the Social Democrats. Brockdorff-Rantzau thought it was not improbable that the Entente would want to expand the negotiations on the question of food supplies, then going on in Spa, into negotiations on preliminaries of peace. "In that case," he said, "I shall not agree under any circumstances to let the negotiations be continued by Erzberger and his armistice commission." It was true that it would not be an easy matter to change the personnel of the delegation if the Entente did not themselves present their terms through fresh diplomatic representatives, but once more through Foch.

We spoke of the desire of the Independents for Kautsky to be made a member of the peace delegation, and Brockdorff-Rantzau dwelt with much amusement on the fact that Kautsky claimed to have discovered him and brought him into office. In the course of his study of the war-time documents in the Foreign Ministry, after the Revolution, Kautsky had been so kind as to notice that a certain Brockdorff-Rantzau had expressed very sound judgments, and to draw the attention of his party friends to this diplomat.

Each time I visited Brockdorff-Rantzau in the weeks that followed there was some big strike in progress, or street fighting somewhere; but we had got used to sitting over a stump of candle at night and hearing the rattle of machine guns, or to going home from work through the dark city

amid the boom of invisible firing. One visit, on April 6th, was made at the moment when the Soviet Republic had just been proclaimed in Munich; then followed the avenging campaign of the White Guards—a dramatic cycle played without a pause in the action. At each visit I found Brockdorff-Rantzau very pessimistic in his judgment of the internal situation, and fairly optimistic when the conversation turned to the peace negotiations. This faith was simply necessary to him if he was to maintain his fighting spirit, and he refused to entertain any doubts. Others, in order to support him, continued their efforts to persuade the envoys of the Allied Governments that Germany was firmly determined to resist, although in their own hearts they were beginning themselves to be doubtful how things would end. On April 7th I had Captain Thornley Gibson, the British Military Attaché, an officer full of good sense and good feeling, to tea at my house with a few prominent German people. Lichnowsky declared to him: "Danzig—we shall refuse to sign; Upper Silesia—we shall refuse to sign," and so on and on with all the terms that seemed impossible to accept. Afterwards Dr. Schacht, who was presiding over the purchase negotiations at Cologne, drew me apart and showed me the impossibility of escaping from general European bankruptcy except through the creation of new values. An international agreement must be concluded, Great Britain taking over the leadership; Germany must provide labour and engineers. Russia must be opened up. There were enormous natural resources in the Ukraine. By their labours the Germans would turn a hundred millions into two hundred. Undoubtedly a sound and excellent plan, only, unfortunately, it was poles apart from everything that had already been settled at Paris between the Allies.

On April 18th the German Government was invited to send plenipotentiaries to Versailles, to receive the text of the terms of peace that had been decided on; the delegation "must be strictly confined to their appointed mission." The invitation was about as polite, if that, as an executioner's might be towards a condemned criminal. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau replied coldly that he would send Minister von Haniel with two Counsellors of Legation and a couple of messengers. Clemenceau was disturbed. Was the splendid theatrical production he had long projected and dreamed of to be spoilt? It would be impossible to arrange an effective spectacle with a Minister of Legation and a couple of messengers. He gave way, agreed to all the concessions asked for, and adopted a less domineering tone. On April 28th Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, the five other delegates, the experts, the members of committees, the secretaries and the rest of the staff, 160 persons in all, set out for Versailles, plunging into the unknown. There were as yet no definite details of the terms; the forecasts were contradictory, and where they were too gloomy many people nursed the comfortable illusion that they were merely "kites."

The ceremony of handing over the document was to take place on May 7th. During the intervening period the delegation was shut off by military sentries from intercourse with the outer world—virtually interned. Once more the experts went busily to work on their memoranda, once more the secretaries accumulated all sorts of statistical material; the typewriters tapped incessantly. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau supervised everything, and occasionally received some emissary, who had come ostensibly to give him information but in reality only to study his bearing, his physical condition, his temper—or to spoil his appetite with

compassionate advice, just as some relative, looking sharp after his heritage, may in apparent innocence betray his deep regret at his dear cousin's desperate state, and so try to help him a little on his way to the grave.

On the morning of May 7th it was learnt at Berlin and Versailles that the *Times* had published an extract from the treaty. Germany was to pay about sixty milliards "on account," and was to be allowed only an army a hundred thousand strong; the decision in regard to the Saar remained open; Danzig was to become a "free city." This seemed to me to be only part of a list; probably Upper Silesia and eastern Germany would follow, and no less probably there would be something about the Rhineland. Herr Viktor Naumann, Minister of Legation, telephoned to me from the Foreign Ministry: unhappily we must expect to find that the *Times'* information was authentic. I replied that unhappily it seemed to me to be incomplete—only one arm and one leg had been chopped off, and that would hardly be all. In the evening the full truth, or something approaching it, became known from a Reuter message. I wrote an article, "*No*," and then was soon forced to realize that just where this call should have summoned armies it died away almost like that of Roland's horn in the valley of Ronceval.

The sitting of May 7th at Versailles, which Clemenceau had arranged as if for a public sitting of a court of justice, for the announcement of the verdict in a sensational trial, has been sufficiently described; every detail of the scene was noted down by eye-witnesses. Clemenceau had laid low many an opponent in the French Chamber of Deputies with the ruthless blows of his oratory; his bludgeoning style had demolished Jules Ferry in his turn; but, for all the genuine fury of these attacks, they were mere amusement, mere



sport and exercise, in comparison with this supreme combat, which had never been out of his view. He had been waiting for it since 1870, since the siege of Paris, and in his merciless pursuit of Jules Ferry he had been spurred on by the angry realization that that statesman was not only single-mindedly pursuing a policy of conciliation, but had sought and found direct gains for France. I was able to discuss Franco-German relations two or three times with Clemenceau, and, peaceful though his words were, he invariably left one with the impression that he had revealed about as much of his real mind as a Tibetan Dalai Lama, and that in the fastness of that peculiar Mongol skull of his there always lurked malignant thoughts. He has said somewhere that the great Revolution was a "*bloc*." Similarly indivisible, to all appearance, was his own personality. He had the art of so forming his sentences that they acquired a monumental character, that they seemed to contain something definitive, comprehensive, conclusive. With more self-criticism and literary sense, and without his excessive indulgence in classical similes, his summoning of all the ancient heroes, his exploitation of Plutarch, he would have resembled the men of the Convention: at great, dramatic moments of his rhetoric he might have been a Roman, a Cato of Utica. This art of coining sentences of bronze, like inscriptions on coins of ancient Rome, dissolved at times, as during the Zola case, into a philosophic discursiveness. In the blaze of war, in his sense of triumph, as leader of France and arbiter of the world, amid the realization of his great patriotic dream, it had found its temper again: every word in his speech was to be historic; and seldom has the determination to humiliate a defeated enemy found so steeled, so case-hardened a phrasing.

It would have been far better if Count Brockdorff-Rantzau

could have improvised a reply to Clemenceau's speech; three or four sentences, dignified without offering provocation, and each one of them within the grasp of his world-wide audience, words to ring in every ear, would have been enough. But he could not trust himself to reply adequately on the spur of the moment; and even if he had had a talent for improvisation he would probably have been unable to bring it into play, for he had alongside him the other members of the delegation, and had to act on lines jointly agreed on. So he read his speech. It deserved at least to receive attention, not only as a part of the historic proceedings but also as a document of distinguished intellectual quality. But the international public had come to see a bullfight; the spectators were in rude and festive spirit, still thrilled with the artistry of the matador; and most of them had no German. They fidgeted through the German reply as though it were a tedious piano solo between the dances. On the whole the argument produced from the delegation workshops under Brockdorff-Rantzau's guidance had been presented in a way I was unable to admire, and I had little hope of any good result from it. There seemed to me to be too much in it about the democratic obligations and the social demands Europe had to meet, and it was in danger of giving the impression of a family of *nouveaux riches* over-anxious to display their new magnificence. Of course, the delegates, men of the new régime and of the democratic parties, were merely putting forward views they had long held, and none of them more sincerely than Brockdorff-Rantzau himself. After his retirement he wrote to Ebert in his letter of farewell: "The German nation is now the world's protagonist of democratic ideas"; this was its "world mission," and "the justification of the existence of the German nation" lay in

the "clear and unambiguous presentation of a policy of democratic self-determination and social justice." But his speech had something of the ring of the old "*am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen*," the old idea of Germany as the healer of the world's troubles, and in any case it was liable to suggest it in the ears of the outer world, still under the influence of the war psychosis. In all this democracy and this new social conscience the world saw only camouflage—that familiar new process—behind which the war-time Germany, crafty as always, was in hiding; and in any case it seemed bizarre that the old democracies should be asked to receive this message from a Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, the very type of pride of caste. For George Gross was not alone in his mistaken estimate.

The count's speech was listened to with impatience: the fact that he read it sitting down created a sensation. This was "provocative," "indecent"; but, for all that, it aroused respect: the vanquished had not sung small. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau told me some time afterwards that he had deliberately not got up and had considered the point beforehand. If Clemenceau had spoken on details and to the point he, Brockdorff-Rantzau, would have stood, have left his manuscript unread, and have made an impromptu reply; but he had been determined to remain seated if Clemenceau thought fit to put off the German delegation with a bit of phrase-making. His brother Ernst used to give much the same description of what happened, and this description has passed into history. I have found it difficult to credit all this thinking out of alternatives, and feel that it is more probable that, even if there was any half-idea in advance of the way he should act, it was the nerves that decided when the time came and the action was more or less instinctive. In any case, this

reply to a blow in the face has become symbolic of Count Brockdorff-Rantzau's attitude that day at Versailles. So Brennus is remembered as the man who threw his sword into the scale, and the Emperor Henry IV, of whom better things could be told, is the man who knocked on the door at Canossa in penitent's garb; and Galileo lives by one phrase, a phrase which in its strength and nobility flouts the stupidity and obscurantism of all ages, and prophesies the inevitable return of the light of day: "It moves for all that!"

The best thing would probably have been for Count Brockdorff-Rantzau to return at once to Berlin. Ernst Rantzau told me that he telephoned to his brother advising him to do that, but without result. The count could not tear himself away from the committee machinery that was working to such perfection around him, and his desperate energy, his "possession," found its safety-valve in this work, however little prospect it held out now of any useful result. The machinery was incessantly at work turning out rebuttals and counter-proposals, notes and memoranda. By these tactics it might be possible to strike out a detail here and there, but no broad political strategy was attainable on these lines; and their continuance, in spite of their hopelessness, for six weeks reduced the chances of any strategical move. Immediately after May 7, after the publication of the dictated terms and under the impulse of the indignation they aroused, it would have been possible to keep up the national will to resistance and set it in motion; but enthusiasm is an evanescent thing at all times, and was infinitely more so among a people in the throes of hunger and privation and endless sufferings. It would have been a difficult thing to get the nation's assent to new sacrifices, to further pilgrimage over stony and barren country, thoroughly exhausted as the

people were already; the conditions were entirely in favour of the undermining work of the advocates of the signing of the treaty. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau and his delegation, the committees and the experts, did splendid work at Versailles, but they had only paper shot to fire against the ramparts behind which the enemy, always invisible, never emerging, was less interested in their notes than in the reports of feeling in Germany. The enemy could afford to make a show of patience. They knew exactly how well their own ends were served by the simple passing of time.

On May 12 the members of the National Assembly, who had suspended their sittings at Weimar, met in the great hall of the University in Berlin. This sitting was intended to be a demonstration of protest against the peace terms and a manifestation of resistance. I had been told that Scheidemann, the Prime Minister, was already wavering; but in his speech he still thundered the word "inacceptable." His forcefulness of tone may have been only the substitute for a missing forcefulness of another sort, but all the members except the Independents, and all the spectators in the galleries, rose and applauded for several minutes. The party leaders who followed played variations on Scheidemann's "inacceptable," and none would be behind the rest in energy of phrase and accent. Outside I met *Oberbürgermeister* Wermuth, a former imperial Secretary of State, who had entered into relations with the Independents. He said to me a little sourly that we seemed to have taken too definite a stand and should have done better to speak more cautiously. In the days that followed I collected many more opinions in all sorts of quarters, though it had to be borne in mind that not every expression of opinion revealed the speaker's whole mind. At a dinner given by Herr von Holtzendorff, managing

director of the Hamburg-Amerika-Linie, at which Admiral von Trotha, Dernburg, Herr Schiffer (member of the Assembly) and others were present, a fairly optimistic view was taken of the consequences of rejecting the terms. Count Bernstorff, my neighbour at table, who was certainly not in the habit of talking recklessly simply for the sake of effect, said he thought that if Germany rejected the terms the Allies would come forward with compromise proposals within a week, or at latest a month.

On the evening of June 3, I met Ebert, Noske, and Scheidemann, at the house of Herr Heine, the Prussian Minister of the Interior. The German counter-proposals had been handed in at Versailles, and very pessimistic messages had just come in about the reception given to them and the attitude of Clemenceau and Wilson. To my surprise, Noske was now thoroughly nervous: the Independents might declare a general strike, the internal situation was exceedingly difficult, the "Noske Guards" might be sufficient in Berlin and a few of the big cities, but could not be all over the country; in any case (here, as usual at such moments, he became stentorian and, so to speak, showed his muscles) he would then need the proclamation of martial law; he could take no responsibility otherwise.

Scheidemann listened rather dejectedly. I repeated what had often been said already, that the whole future of democracy depended on the decision taken, the Republic would lose all support if later generations, with no knowledge of our present perplexities, were able to throw upon it the blame for the acceptance of such a treaty, and that we must look beyond the momentary difficulties to meet which the Noske Guards had been organized. Ebert came to my assistance:

"The matter can be considered from many angles, we could talk about it for hours, and there is certainly room for differences of opinion, there are plainly things to be said on both sides. But I still hold to the opinion that as honest men we simply cannot put our signature to such terms of peace, and if we mean to pursue an honest policy we must say No, unless we are offered other terms after all, which is hardly to be expected."

It would be a great injustice to blame indiscriminately all those who were in favour of signing. Among them were large numbers of people who loved their country at least as much, and had at least as strong national feeling, as many of those who made a great show of their determination to resist without having any responsibility to bear or any intention of seeking it. Those who were for signing considered that the nation would soon break down under the new trial, and that it absolutely needed a breathing space after the four terrible years of war. The first thing to do was to prevent chaos from breaking over us, to keep the nation alive, to save the country from destruction, to gain time. This seemed the only practical policy, and those who supported it were neither coldhearted nor cowardly, but simply reasonable. They might have pointed to the French precedent when Thiers—setting his authority against Gambetta and the advocates of *guerre à outrance*, the bitter-enders—went to Bismarck, and, though under very different conditions, concluded peace. They could have met all criticism by recalling that the statesman who took that hard and painful course was not blamed but praised to the skies, and that at the parliamentary sitting on June 16, 1877, Gambetta, the organizer of resistance, himself shouted to the wildly excited assembly the famous words:

*"Le libérateur du territoire, le voilà!"*

But was there any necessity for the resistance to signing to be an armed resistance and a continuation of the bloodshed? Walter Rathenau's summons to a *levée en masse* was too theatrical; I did not for a moment expect it to succeed, and it brought no response. After the short war of 1870 it was still possible in France to think of raising a popular army, but four years' fighting had utterly exhausted the German reserves of men fit for combatant service. The only thing possible was passive resistance—to let the enemy armies march in, to avoid all fighting, and to give the commanders of the occupying troops no ground or pretext for extensive punitive measures. It would have been hard, but the ordeal could not have lasted long. How long would the governments in London, Rome, and Washington have kept their soldiers waiting for the joy of home-coming, and compelled them to carry out the unheroic duty of holding down a foreign country, an embittered and starving people? And would France have faced the task unaided?

The Independent Party was the only one that was solidly in favour of signing; the demand was steadily and emphatically made at their mass meetings, in their newspapers, and by their open-air speakers. The exchange of courtesies between Count Brockdorff-Rantzau and the supporters of Hugo Haase had ceased. Quite apart from any other considerations, the leaders of the Independents regarded the treaty issue as a suitable means of enticing the masses, with their thirst for peace, from the Ebert Socialists and drawing them over to the more radical side. But the commander-in-chief of this retreat was Erzberger, the rosy-cheeked angel of peace on the stripped Christmas-tree as he had been amid its fresh glitter. During the first years of the war he had been



rather on the side of the annexationists; now, like the still more unstable Harden, he was for submission with all its consequences, and he would have been glad to go to Versailles as a peace delegate to pursue that policy. What happened at his meeting with Foch, to whom he had gone to negotiate the armistice, should have taught him better, but his ignorance of the language had prevented him from understanding the Commander-in-Chief's French. In order to do something to satisfy him, and to have him a little more under control, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau had offered him a place in the delegation, but Erzberger wanted to be leader and not a simple member of it. Now this all too mobile spirit was pursuing a policy of his own in Berlin. His activity began to be dangerous and to call for a note of warning, and I wrote an article against him, which appeared on June 10. He sent a clever secretary to me to tell me that a particularly regrettable interview which had appeared abroad, and had been described as "with a person closely associated with Erzberger," had been published entirely without his authority, and that I was doing him an injustice. I replied that if he was ready to express his solidarity with Brockdorff-Rantzau I should be glad to publish that statement and to comment on it in the most cordial terms. That evening, at a meeting in one of the Ministries, I was sitting at a table with some acquaintances when Erzberger crossed the room and joined us, taking a chair next to me that happened to be unoccupied. He chattered away unconcernedly, with the charming and almost naïve freedom of a simple southerner; he touched on every possible subject, always excepting the attack on him; he expressed disapproval, on the other hand, of the way certain newspapers were trying to frighten us into signing; more than ever he was just a rubber ball, receiving the hardest

blows without showing the slightest trace of a dint.

The German counter-proposals were rejected, only insignificant concessions being handed out to the waiting delegation; and the early signature of the treaty was now demanded. On June 17 Count Brockdorff-Rantzau and the whole delegation left for Weimar. The count hoped to get the agreement of the other members of the Cabinet and of the National Assembly to a policy of resistance, and was so full of the idea that he was unable to conceive of any other decision being possible at Weimar. One or other of his colleagues in the delegation—the Ministers Landsberg and Giesberts, Herr Leinert, President of the Prussian Diet, Herr Schücking, and Dr. Melchior—may have been less confident of success, but he had carried them all away, and in the train that took them back to Germany they once more placed on record their unanimous resolve. I noted down some of my experiences of the days that followed at Weimar. I will reproduce a few of these notes here, as the freshly plucked impressions, even if they have since acquired something of the inevitable tinge of the herbarium, may reveal the struggle between conflicting views, and the progressive loss of hold on the original resolve, better than a more elaborate description.

Weimar, June 18. In the morning, on my arrival, the first man I met was Under Secretary of State Baake, at breakfast in the hotel coffee-room. I asked him how things stood at Weimar, and he replied casually, seeming to be more interested in the quality of the hotel coffee, that most people were in favour of signing.

"Who?" I asked, and he said: "The Majority Socialists especially, but also the Centre and the Democrats."

I said I hoped he was mistaken; his only reply was a shrug of the shoulders; he was not going to be disturbed amid his

comfort, and proceeded to spread the *eyrsatz*-butter on another roll. Further meetings followed in the lounge and out of doors, and at first I found nothing but dismal prophecies and the embarrassment of people who are manifestly on the point of giving way and trying still to keep up appearances. Herr Baake's shrug of the shoulders has clearly become a favourite movement here, almost as universal as the nodding heads of the little Chinese figures that used to be seen on every drawing-room table. Then, happily, Walter Schücking came up to me, just arrived by the delegation's train. We took a walk together through the town, and on the way Schücking declared to me with extraordinary vigour that we must not sign this treaty, it was quite impossible, and particularly for a convinced pacifist like himself an absolute impossibility. Ludwig Haas, now a Minister in the Baden Government, joined us; he entirely shared our views. The three of us went on together; I said my first impressions in Weimar had been dreadful, and Haas replied that unfortunately this first impression was accurate; there was not yet a general stampede, but the number of those ready to sign was increasing hourly. Haas spoke emphatically and with indignation, and even more expressive were his strong, handsome features. Other members of the Assembly met us; one of them declared that a week after the entry of foreign troops the whole transport system would be disorganized by lack of coal and there would be famine. Another one was afraid that the South Germans would sign independently and Germany would fall to pieces. Payer, of Württemberg, knew the feeling there and was for signing; the Bavarians had been against giving in, but the Democrat Müller-Meiningen, for all his nationalist fervour during the war, had converted them. It is evident that the fiercest people of yesterday have become the tamest to-day, and after their past facility in the use of the active form "I shall cut up" they are having little difficulty now with the passive form.

After these experiences I went back to the Hotel Fürstenhof to lunch. Viktor Naumann sat down next to me. He said at once: "You will find us signing." This good fellow, so little like a diplomat either in appearance or in his communicativeness, always set out to make himself the best

informed of men during the war, and pushed himself in everywhere like Erzberger, if not with Erzberger's irresistible elbows. Now that he has got into the Foreign Ministry, with the rank of head of a Legation, he is a man one must listen to. But his pessimistic talk spoiled my appetite, all the more because I could not feel any longer that there was no reason for it. If only to stem the flow of his eloquence, I said I was going to the Palace to see Brockdorff-Rantzau. He was ready at once to go with me and to announce me to his chief, who was lunching with Ebert and the Ministers. This time we met nobody on the way but Blunck, the Hamburg Democrat, who complimented me on my attitude and considered it to be the only right one.

Brockdorff-Rantzau had not yet come away from lunch, but in a few minutes he came into the drawing-room in which I was waiting, and drew me into his study, with every courtesy, but with some signs of nervous tension. He wanted to thank me, and especially for the article against Erzberger; at the mention of the name his face showed the most icy hostility. He was manifestly overtired, but I felt that he was at his best. He was as tense as a tautly strung bow; his passionate resolution, regardless of physical limitations, dominated and suppressed his inward misgivings; his glance was not veiled and clouded but clear and penetrating; there was nothing left of the affected or mannered or dandified. It is very sad that this immense effort should avail nothing. Does he know that, or has he any illusions left?—but if he could already see defeat ahead, imminent and unescapable, his spirit could not be so unbroken.

"I stand or fall," he said to me, "by the refusal to sign." Then he asked my impression of the feeling in Weimar, and, painful as it was to damp his hopes and so, perhaps, to cripple him, it was impossible entirely to conceal the truth. I ought really to have said that the ice was already broken up; all I did say was that there were serious cracks and it no longer looked very safe. Some members, I said, were talking of a compromise, suggesting that the Entente ultimatum should be replied to with a sort of German ultimatum, with some quite definite proposed amendments, and that it should be stated that under these conditions the treaty would be signed, but not otherwise. Brockdorff-Rantzau replied that

for him there could be no compromise. Even if the conditions were so framed that he felt able to transmit the offer, he would resign afterwards, for he stood for another policy, and there must be no mistake about that. He thought, however, that he would be able to carry his own view. Yes, I was too pessimistic; he hoped to bring the National Assembly round to his opinion. He had already put backbone into the Cabinet once more; the things he had told it at its first meeting had already "had some effect." He would speak in the National Assembly; his speech was ready, in his leather case there on the desk. It was bound to make an impression. Although I was so exacting a critic of his (this little bit of flattery was more like his normal self), I should certainly approve the speech; there were all sorts of things in it that had not before been brought out. I left him after a while, as the tiredness showed more and more plainly beneath his energy, and he had soon to go to another Cabinet meeting. I went upstairs to Hugo Preuss, who told me that the Government was fairly firm, "with the exception of Erzberger and a few others"—much as one might say that with the exception of the kidneys, the lungs, and one or two other little matters, the patient's organs were still fairly healthy.

The town is full of foreign correspondents, mostly of Entente newspapers; when they catch sight of me they want to know the very latest news. Some of them are really well-intentioned and condemn the treaty; one has to consider with each one of them what use he will make of the information he gets. In the evening the Democrats met for a discussion in the Fürstenhof. Oeser, Minister of Railways, told me in private that it was not impossible that there might be a general strike of the railwaymen; the situation was very grave; nevertheless, we must stand out against signing. Petersen, in the chair, read a report from Schücking on the Cabinet meeting. Pachnicke, member of the Assembly, spoke with infinite diplomacy; Quidde very earnestly and emphatically. A South German journalist gave a sound pedagogical drubbing to all those who were not prepared to accept the treaty, and then it was time to go to bed.

Weimar, June 19. Viktor Naumann came to the Fürstenhof at eight o'clock in the morning, touchingly anxious

to impart to me all he knew, and told me about the Cabinet meeting, which had lasted until 2.30 a.m. Noske had been especially urgent in advocacy of signing, and Wissel, and Schmidt, the Minister of Food, had spoken in the same vein. These three Social Democrat Ministers, Noske, of course, above all, had already given a good push to the wavering souls; virtue was now only making the usual last pretence of resistance, and was at the point of falling. Even Ebert was beginning to be influenced by Noske; he could see, too, how all round him people were giving way; but he was still fighting against it, and was really very unhappy at the way things were going. Brockdorff-Rantzau had made a poor show, sitting through it all "fit to burst," but unfortunately lacking as usual in debating skill. He had been silent most of the time, taking little part in the discussion and that ineffectively. Heavens! In the few hours between my visit and the Cabinet meeting he must have had opportunity enough to realize the truth; the proud sails now hung limply, robbed of the optimism that had kept them taut. The Democratic Minister Gothein, Naumann added, had held out splendidly, trying to counter all Noske's arguments. But now everybody else was simply in search of the "saving formula" that would more or less decently cover up the collapse. No doubt they will find it.

On the way to the theatre, that is to say, to the National Assembly, I met Hugo Haase, and although I knew it would be wasted effort I tried at least to prove to him that refusal was the only right and sensible course, particularly from the standpoint of pacifist practical politics. If he and his people had set themselves at the head of the movement for resistance, as their French comrades did in 1871, I thought they would have been extremely wise and would have been able to influence the whole future. He considered that I was looking at things too much from the standpoint of home politics, while it seemed to me that he and his colleagues, in their anxiety to get the working class electorate away from the Majority Socialists, were themselves making that mistake. He said the nation had suffered too much, and if he had come out in favour of resistance he would have been unable to carry the masses with him. Nor would anything have been attainable by refusal; he was expecting much more

from the demobilization in the Entente countries; after that the revulsion of feeling over there would come quite automatically. Just what everybody says who does not want to do anything himself: he waits for someone else to make the critical move; and, if he is not quite sure that anybody will, the thought that someone may by and by comforts him for the moment.

In the foyer of the theatre, in which members and journalists were talking in groups, there sat Professor Haguenin, in a comfortable armchair, as much at his ease and as entirely at home as if he were the most welcome of guests. Round him and in his neighbourhood men were talking in loud voices of Germany's coal stocks—only enough for four days. It is not true; we have more than that. When he caught sight of me, Haguenin called out from his easy chair:

"Are you very angry with me about the treaty? It looks like it to me."

"There is no reason why I should be angry with you personally, but you know what would be done with the treaty if I had my way."

"And what good would that do to you? You would only be obliging Foch."

"Anyway we should see how the Entente peoples themselves liked to have it rejected. If they would not mind, why are we being so pressed to sign, where is all the urgency?"

No one any longer doubts what is going to happen in the end, and the only question now is whether the Democrats shall leave the Government. If the parliamentary group stick to their resolution to refuse to sign, as seems probable, it will follow as a matter of course that their Ministers must resign.

In the evening there was another meeting of the group; Walter Schücking made a brilliant speech and effectively summarized once more all that there is to be said against signing. A vote was then taken. Only one member is for unconditional acceptance. Seven, including Herr von Payer, are for the dispatch of fresh proposals, though without binding themselves to reject the treaty if that step fails, as it presumably would. Fifty-eight are against signing unless the unacceptable demands are removed from the treaty.

At about 2.15 a.m. a message was brought to me that the Cabinet had resigned. Schücking, who is in the Fürstenhof, asked me to go to see him once more. We remained together until three; both of us agreed that there was no point now in putting forward counter-proposals or "conditions," for the Entente Powers care no more about them than the cook cares about the last wriggle of the fish on the kitchen table.

Weimar, June 20. Very early, a fresh meeting of the Democrats, who apparently find it necessary to follow the practice Tacitus ascribed to the old Teutons, of reconsidering in the soberness of the morning the decisions arrived at the evening before over the drinking-horns. Yet heaven knows that even yesterday the Democrats did not look like having any difficulty in finding the keyhole. But to-day Payer's seven have become thirteen, and Gothein himself has gone over to "signing on conditions." Ebert was at him during the night, and he has also been influenced by Noske's pessimistic statements; his nerves are in a very bad state, and he is said to have been nearly crying at the sitting. As I went out I met Erzberger's close associate, Herr von Stockhammer: he was looking in the shop windows and studying post-Goethean Weimar. He told me that Erzberger would not think of taking the Foreign Ministry; if he took anything it would have to be some other portfolio. I replied that in view of his doubtful gift for foreign policy that would be desirable. In the afternoon Schücking showed me the text, now completed, of the conditional acceptance to be sent to the Entente. Six "conditions," on the fulfilling of which they will sign; the whole thing fearfully amateurish, and in every respect an undignified compromise. Schücking and Melchior agree with me that it would create a wretched impression abroad, and that its dispatch must be prevented. We determined to go together to see Brockdorff-Rantzau. At the Palace we were unable to find him; at dinner we learned that the Note is not to be sent—news that was received with a fairly general feeling of relief.

Weimar, June 21. Among the Democrats there are some who are not too anxious to leave the Government: one or two who have been in the Cabinet so far are unwilling to give up



office, and more than one would be glad to accept it. If it were only the go-getters it would not matter so much, but I have been rather nonplussed to find much the same feeling among men of incontestable worth. Ambition, like ivy, will climb up anything, however shaky. However, it must lie low now, for the Democratic group resolved unanimously this morning that none of its members should enter the new Cabinet; even those whose hopes were thus dashed to the ground were compelled in decency to vote for the resolution, secretly cursing as they cut their own throats.

It is entirely understandable that Hugo Preuss should bitterly regret his enforced resignation, since the Constitution was his own work and he does not know now how he can go on with it. He is not a member of the Assembly, and no longer a Minister; thus he can no longer take any part at all in the debate on the Constitution—a grotesque situation indeed. He was pale with agitation as he told me what had happened. Ebert did his very utmost to induce him to remain; he was beside himself and actually wept; he said the Democrats must not leave him in the lurch now: they were entirely indebted to the Social Democrats for their ministerial posts. That is not quite true; they were in Prince Max of Baden's Cabinet. Preuss replied that he could do nothing independently of his group. Ebert then offered to publish a statement that would show that he was only remaining to complete the Constitution and was not in agreement with the Cabinet in regard to signing.

We fed with Leinert, the President of the Prussian Assembly; he made the very sensible suggestion that the Cabinet must make Preuss a Government Commissary for the period of the debate on the Constitution. After lunch I went with Preuss, who had been cheered up by this hopeful proposal, to the Palace, as Brockdorff-Rantzau wanted to see me. "In cases like this," said Preuss, thoroughly pleased and laughing now, "people always declare that they are glad to be free from office, but they are probably a bit hypocritical; so far as I am concerned, I confess that I like being a Minister."

I was afraid of finding Brockdorff-Rantzau broken up, or at least in utter perplexity, but it was not quite as bad as that. Wrath and indignation are stimulants that help men over moments of acute depression. For all that, he looked

fearfully ill as he brought me from the anteroom into his study. His face was yellow, his thin hair seemed to be dank with perspiration over his troubled brow, his glance was no longer steady but full of the impotent anger of a fighting animal caught and caged, and his lean and slender figure had an almost morbidly emaciated appearance, although he preserved his proud erectness.

"You know," I began, "there was nothing more to be done here: you refused to believe it, but the ice was completely broken up."

"I had all but succeeded," he said furiously, "but that criminal Erzberger has ruined everything."

With the immemorial instinct of natures much more primitive than his own, he sought a single object on which to unload his hatred, or vented it on the one guilty head brought to him; once more he was "possessed," seeing in his imagination only the one offender. He talked of Erzberger's intrigues and chicanery, only breaking off once to ask incidentally what I thought of some friend or relation of his, whether he also had not been rather doubtful in his attitude. The count went on to say that he ought to have left Versailles at least twice in order to bring the people in Berlin to reason. The unanimity of front at Versailles might have suffered, but many things which his absence from Berlin had made possible would not have happened. "The nation must be given a lead," he said, and said again: it was true and obvious and, in fact, a commonplace, and yet it sounded like the echo of a remaining self-deception. Now, within limits, of course, one really was reminded of Mirabeau at bay, throwing himself furiously against the onrush of his pursuers in the stormy scenes of his last rhetorical battle. Brockdorff-Rantzau is going to-morrow to Berlin to give a farewell address to his staff, and then he will leave town and retire to Annettenhöh. Take it all in all, he was a fine fighter, and the tragic muse has granted a monument in her sacred groves to many a worse.

Weimar, June 22, Sunday. I am leaving to-night after the meeting of the National Assembly, which begins at noon. I have even a sleeping car ticket, just received from Wolfgang Heine, who is taking an earlier train. As the railway strike is

still not quite over, it is impossible to say exactly when a train will reach Berlin. In front of the National Theatre an interested Sunday crowd of sightseers has been filling the square. The sun has arranged festal illuminations, which on this occasion seem like a mistake of the management. Inside, the galleries were mainly occupied by the ladies of Weimar. Behind me were the spare little General Märker and some officers, disgusted at the idea of signing, and furious with Erzberger; and they saw no need to moderate their voices in saying so. Bauer, the new Chancellor, read a quite well drafted speech, probably the work of Ulrich Rauscher. The party leaders who followed were either too rhetorical or dull. Almost all the Democrats were vexed at finding that the executive had put up Herr Schiffer to speak, instead of Walter Schücking, who, as a pacifist respected all over the world, would have been the right speaker. Haase spoke very badly. There came a short dispute between him and Bauer; it produced laughter in the galleries, very ill-suited to the occasion. At last the vote was taken; the ladies stood up to see better. The majority for signing was even bigger than expected. Outside we found once more the sightseers, the sunshine, a summer Sunday, a Weimar idyll. From a restaurant garden came pleasant music.

In the hotel I found a photograph of Brockdorff-Rantzau, with a farewell message. It was only a picture postcard; Brockdorff-Rantzau apologized for having nothing else he could send. Under the photograph he had put his signature and the date of this day on which the final act of the drama had been gone through at Weimar. On arrival in Berlin there was the usual string of wretched old vehicles in front of the Anhalt station, coach-house lumber in its last stages. There are quainter examples than ever on days when tramway or underground or electrical workers are on strike. An old driver who took me home in his growler, crouching on his box-seat, in utter rags, showed me the stump of his whip, with which he urged forward his miserable, limping horse.

He told me—the slowness of the journey gave plenty of time for conversation—that a whip now costs twenty-six marks. The price had been up to thirty-six. No honest man could pay such a price. “It is more than you can stand,” he said, shaking his head, “you can’t go on living like this, sir, we must sign, there’s no help for it.”

## IX

### SOCRATES AND EXILE

IN the Giardino Pubblico of Lugano, a few steps from the lake, there is a marble Socrates, the work of a Russian sculptor, presented to the town by a Russian lady. It is the dying or dead Socrates—he has drunk the cup of hemlock; the poison has gnawed away the roots of his life, and the strong frame lies resting, stretched on a couch, the muscles relaxed and uncontrolled, the arms hanging limply; the strange Silenus's head, in which Aristophanes could only see a ridiculous ugliness, has dropped a little forward. The sturdy thick-set figure, with the broad shoulders fit for a porter, is still that of the ex-soldier, the hoplite, on whom the hardships of winter and summer in Thrace could make no impression. The head, with its domed brow, its squat snub nose, its thick lips and its curly beard, seems still to house that pertinacious, insubordinate spirit. Standing before this very impressive work of the sculptor, one has no difficulty in imagining how that stubborn moral preacher, within whose massive skull there lived a very restricted but quite complete world of ideas, would hold fast to the cloaks of the most highly respected citizens of Athens, in the shade of the pillared halls, and set out to demonstrate to them by intricate dialectical questioning and a circumstantial examination, that their mental processes were of the feeblest and shallowest, that they were merely repeating borrowed

phrases, and that they were ignorant of the difference between good and evil, between beauty and ugliness, between courage and cowardice, and of the true nature of virtue and honesty and justice. One sees him also, in his trial before the *dikastai*, provoking the death sentence by his aggressive irony; one sees him replying with counter-charges to the accusation of blasphemy and of the corruption of youth, and the other charges against him, in a way that left the judges no room for clemency, reluctant as they were to pass the supreme sentence.

Xenophon and his other followers were surely not mistaken when they assumed that he desired this death and sought it, because he was almost seventy years of age and wanted to die in the midst of his full powers, before the first signs of decay, and because he felt that he was giving an example to all, and that this ending to his life, which could not fail to become a beacon to the ages to come, was of the noblest and happiest sort. For thirty days the condemned philosopher had been engaged in his prison in unceasing discussions with the whole company of his friends and disciples, with Phædo, Crito, Hermogenes, and all the rest, on moral problems and on the immortality of the soul. Now the last day had passed. As the sun went down the gaoler, weeping—how much humanity and civilized feeling there was even at the most inhumane moments, as they seem, of Athens!—had given the sign that cut short the philosophical conversations and brought the moment for the philosophy to be put to the test. Socrates had drunk the poison, had lain down at full length; his friends, battling with difficulty with their grief, had spoken to him to the last; Crito had closed his eyes. To-day everyone knows that neither the destruction of the high-souled moral teacher nor that of the really subversive

elements was of any great service to the inviolable gods who had been supposedly outraged. For before very long those gods had become no more than stage puppets which a fickle humanity treated without the least shred of respect.

In the neighbourhood of Lago Maggiore, a little house was added not long ago to the villas and country houses that have been springing up everywhere on the ridge above Ascona. It stands about half-way up the hillside, a little distance from the motor road leading up to Monte Verità. It is a simple, pleasant dwelling, uninfluenced by the modern style affected by the architects of Ascona, but in a very fine position, standing in a garden with big beds of flowers; old trees rooted in the steep slopes of the hill form the bulwark and boundary of the charming property. On the August day on which I paid a visit to the owner, the rows of beds were filled with great red and mauve dahlias, asters of many shades, and red salvias, massed together in bushy clusters, each species tended with the care of a keen gardener and kept apart from the rest. Next to the house and behind it were the vegetable plots, with rows of beans and peas, gherkins for pickling, cabbages and lettuce; there was even, a rarity in the environment of these villas, a modest potato field. From the pleasant balconied terrace on which we sat drinking the white wine of the country we looked out to the picturesquely winding shore below, the emerald surface, broad here, of Lago Maggiore, and beyond it the chain of mountains and the thickly wooded foothills behind which, hidden from view, lies Lake Lugano. These mountains, especially in the morning and in the late afternoon, have the hazy remoteness, the unreality, the mystical, ethereal magic of the Ticino, with its ever new surprises. Here the sharper air of Switzerland and

the festal radiance of the South happily mingle and merge into one another.

The owner and occupier of this house is Otto Braun, who until July 20, 1932, was Prussian Prime Minister, and who was generally accounted the strongest personality of the Republican period. Friends and opponents alike had a very high opinion of his statesmanship, and when his opponents inveighed against his tyranny, calling him "Tsar of Prussia," it was in recognition rather than with any political animus. His powerful figure, big and broad-shouldered, towering above those round him and holding its own alongside Hindenburg's less mobile frame, contributed to the picture formed of him as a strong and steadfast popular ruler. His East Prussian accent and his East Prussian characteristics in general heightened this impression.

He seemed the very embodiment of energy. It is true that this magnificent energy diminished in the latter half of his period of office, until at last there came an unmistakable reluctance to move at all. He had a crippled wife who required continual tending and who would not do without him for long at a time: this claim on him robbed him of something of his buoyancy and alertness. His talents and intelligence were natural, untrained gifts, and before his will-power slackened and his interest in state business lost its keenness he was rightly regarded as a "born" head of a government; in any case, unusual authority flowed from the personality of this "tyrant." He was rightly charged with having been too inclined to place inefficient and tactless party comrades in important administrative posts, but parasites grow on other trees besides the tree of Socialism. He himself lived very simply and economically. His only pleasure was hunting. On one occasion he shot a stag and



two roes in the state forests of Schorfheide, and brought denunciations on himself for his presumption in engaging in the sport of gentlemen—so stern were the anti-Republicans as censors of propriety.

In any case, it was only in the handing out of jobs that he often brought his Socialist principles into play: he had to have regard to the other parties in the Government coalition, and contented himself with making sure of conscientious financial administration and gradual improvements; he was not in a position to initiate important social or cultural reforms, and made no attempt to do so. He was head of the Government in a democratic State of which the middle class, capitalist superstructure was borne on the shoulders of the Socialist working classes as its only solid support; on the backs of these caryatids it grew high and spacious and stately. In Prussia, as in the rest of the country, the promises of the Constitution very soon became as remote and incredible as the naïve gush a young girl at a boarding school may inscribe in her friend's album. It could always be contended that the disunion among the workers (which really meant little more than the quarrels between the rival party mandarins) had made it impossible to turn fine ideals into a fine reality. But at least the Prussia of Otto Braun long seemed to be the one strong and impregnable fortress of Republicanism among the German states; for even if much else might be neglected, the police organization was exemplary, the maintenance of order was admirable, and both the Commandant and some of his immediate subordinates were quite certainly prepared to defend the Republic. It was the bitterest of disappointments when this Prussian fortress capitulated to the enemy without a blow.

Otto Braun went promptly—all too promptly, it must be



PRUSSIAN PREMIER OTTO BRAUN



said—by car across the frontier into Switzerland. In memory of many a hunting talk Hindenburg, whose memory was often less to be relied on, gave protection to Braun. So the strongest man in Prussia came into exile here by Lago Maggiore unmolested and in tolerable circumstances. The Republic had been saved the trouble of a Waterloo.

Otto Braun was a typical East Prussian. In the past he had been a compositor, but he had always had a great love of agriculture. Before he became Prime Minister he had been Minister of Agriculture in the Prussian Cabinet, and at the time when he had already begun to show a good deal of indifference in regard to other matters, he still retained a lively interest in problems of settlement on the land, of entail, and of everything connected with agrarian production, improvement, and the proportioning of crops. He already possessed the first strip of his bit of land on the hillside above Ascona, and with savings he was able to get out of Germany he added to it. On his arrival in this asylum he cleared the land and made it fit for cultivation, and gradually and systematically planted it. He did this almost entirely unaided, as though he had never been anything else but a gardener and agricultural labourer, and turned his fairly extensive plot from a wilderness into a fruitful and flourishing hermit's paradise. The sun blazed down on him as he worked; once he had sunstroke, but his strong constitution soon pulled him through.

I found him more athletic than ever, a little bent but bronzed and active. His wife had died, and a pleasant housekeeper had taken over the duties of the simple household. With intelligible and justified pride he showed me all the work he had done, from the magnificent blaze of his flower beds to the potato field. He no longer ruled over

Prussia with its three hundred thousand square kilometres and nearly forty million inhabitants, but he was administering his secure hillside plot, far from the sounds of battle, in cheerful contentment. Candide, the disciple of the optimist philosopher Pangloss, came at last from all his strange and often disastrous adventures to the simple piece of wisdom: "*Cultivons notre jardin.*" Otto Braun, who perhaps had not read Voltaire, had come away from the summit of power to follow this unpretentious rule of life.

Like the philosopher Pangloss (who had not been guardian of the State and in command over the masses), Otto Braun had enveloped himself in the homely wrapping of that dictum. It is poles apart from the spirit of the dying Socrates. Many men have drunk hemlock in our day. But the phrase does them less than justice. The treatment meted out to Socrates up to the moment of his death would have been regarded in our day as absurd, unmanly, feeble. They were strange prison regulations that permitted the condemned man to gather his followers round him until the end and to preach his subversive ideas to them; and what must have been the quality of the staff when a gaoler was moved to tears by the fate of a prisoner! Among the many discoveries we owe to certain savants of the present day, pride of place belongs surely to the new theory that Hellenic culture and art came originally from the Teutons, who descended upon Hellas from their forests to endow the Greek spirit with their gentle and exalted conception of life. It is an interesting historical discovery, but it is not quite easy to follow its steps.

There may have been differences of spirit between the many unfortunates whose courage brought them death or imprisonment in the shipwreck of the Republic. Some went of their own free will to meet their fate, bearing defiant witness,

and refusing to conform, though they knew what was in store for them; some did not know and let things slide, or deceived themselves with the assurance that "nothing will happen to me," until in the end, when they decided to pack and go, it was too late. There live in the regions through which Dante roamed those of whom we know, whose voices were widely familiar in the past, and their names household words; behind them are those who never achieved fame, who were not in any way striking, never came to the fore, were never heard of until they were given a sentence that robbed them of freedom or of life. The impressive staging of his death made Socrates the symbol of steadfastness. The steadfastness that is shown in utter obscurity is the most heroic of all.

As I sat with Otto Braun on the balcony of his little house, while he poured the white wine into our glasses, I had no intention of making him talk about his own case. But he manifestly wanted to unburden his mind, to justify himself, to talk out of existence the thing that oppressed him. He revealed no sign of unrest; but it was there, and it may be that he only laboured with such excessive bodily exertion in order to suppress it. His former party friends had made plain to him their disapproval and disappointment with him; even those who had themselves fled into safety had cut him off, had interred his memory, knew him no more. The very reeds whispered against him. He might have said that Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and the other great men of the Social Democracy did not wait to be put into prison under Bismarck's anti-Socialist legislation, but fled abroad in time, and that Lenin and Trotzky prudently waited in Zurich until the Revolution in Russia had driven out the Tsardom and its police. He would probably have been told that Karl Marx,

and the Socialist leaders of the older generation, and Lenin and Trotsky, were not Prime Ministers and had not been entrusted with the guarding of popular liberties. He might have answered that Hannibal, when in supreme command of the armies of Carthage, fled to Antioch. But Hannibal fled in order to act, not to grow lettuce.

Otto Braun made no attempt, however, to bring out this array of historic precedent, to hide behind these statues: he gave an unrhetorical, unvarnished account of what had happened, without attempting to pass over the things that could be used against him. The National Socialist victory at the polls on April 24, 1932, had destroyed his majority in the Prussian Parliament, and he told me now how he had wanted to resign, had made all preparations and cleared his desk, and how he found himself compelled to stay on and on, in an impossible situation, without the shadow of any real power. He told me how when Hitler marched in he got into a car and drove without any incident of note, with one of his staff at the wheel, to Ascona. He told me candidly how a deputation from the Social Democratic executive visited him at Ascona and urged him to come to Berlin for the Reichstag sitting at which the new régime was to celebrate its triumph, and to appear once more at the head of his comrades; he told me why he refused. What could it have been but a purposeless, impotent, pitiable demonstration?—even if a demonstration had been possible at all, for he would not have been allowed to speak in the Reichstag, he would have been shouted down; the interruption would have been quite ineffective, and the newspapers would have disposed of it with a few contemptuous lines.

These arguments were not entirely convincing. The journey to Berlin would not have been a perilous enterprise,

for in those days the watch on the Social Democratic leaders had not yet been organized; the members of Parliament who came to Berlin from abroad in heaviness of spirit to attend the sitting were not detained there; and Otto Braun would have had protection from a venerated quarter, as Achilles had that of the goddess Athene. The people who grudge their own skin and are only ready to take someone else's to market are not an attractive species of humanity, and many people who talk bravely reveal on inspection only this sort of bravery. Nobody could properly demand of Otto Braun that he should invite martyrdom. The first Christian bishops very sensibly ruled that the purposeless martyrdom to which hysterical and ambitious fanatics of the faith were devoting themselves was not meritorious and not pleasing to Heaven. Yet an excursion to the last ceremony staged on parliamentary lines, the last at which the opponents of the men now in power could take part, would scarcely have been likely to have such serious consequences. Is it suggested that the gesture would have been childish, and that, whether the flag is lowered with drums or without, a capitulation still remains a capitulation? But it makes a difference how such an event remains impressed on the popular imagination. Nations, when they look back at a later day, judge the great drama by various small accompaniments, by some episode in the action, and illustrate the pages of world history for themselves with trivial incidents. The guardians of the Republic had been excellent guardians; but they failed to realize the needs of the imagination and the importance of satisfying them.

And then Otto Braun had gone abroad in great haste and unnecessarily soon, and that had made a fatal impression. There was no need, moreover, for him to have gone so far.



Munich, for instance, was quite a pleasant place at the time; it was still possible to vote there on March 5, at the Reichstag election, as a free and upstanding citizen. For the time being, the brown-shirted fellows with their broad swastika armlets and their jack-boots were merely eyeing every voter in the waiting-rooms and on the pavement, standing erect and watchful; it was only four days later, on the evening of March 9, that they were sent out to the attack. On the morning of March 5, actually the critical morning, the wireless message was broadcast to the nation that the Prussian Prime Minister had left Germany by car and had succeeded in reaching Switzerland, and this news was repeated six times, ten times, over and over again. For the Social Democrats and for all the opponents of the National Socialists it was no small blow. First in the State, first in the nation, and the first in Switzerland? It was not surprising that party colleagues had nothing good to say of this mute, inglorious farewell.

Otto Braun told me why it was that he could not defend the Republic, why in Prussia he was impotent, and how at every move he met with obstacles and resistance. He mentioned various things which in justice must be borne in mind. The federal states had too much independence, and their political self-will frustrated every attempt at unified defence, tore holes in every general system. Any subversive agitation driven out of Prussia found a field of action in one of the neighbouring states. There it was immune from pursuit, was even assisted and glorified, was no longer treason but patriotism. There were lurking places everywhere, the whole country was riddled with fox-holes, and if one was closed up twenty more were within easy reach. And while every state with a majority and a government hostile

to the Constitution was delighted to be able to render futile the measures adopted by a loyal neighbour, the national Government was disinclined to take any energetic action. Some of the officials received their orders from Ministers of their State, and the State paid their salary. Other large groups were national officials and had to listen only to the orders of the national Ministers. Prussian officials were forbidden by their government to belong to the National Socialist Party, and if they attended a National Socialist meeting it might go ill with them. But the postal and railway officials and the gentlemen in the Ministries of the Reich could march in procession through the streets under the swastika banner if they liked. These grotesque conditions had been carried on from one Constitution to the next, from the German Confederation to the Empire and from the Empire to the Republic. In bright and peaceful times the various sections worked together fairly well, but when the dark days came they fought each for its own hand, and in stormy times all was chaos. Only a ruthless fist could tame fifty rival lusts for domination. The fact that it did so must be given due recognition. The blow sent into the air all the lumber with which the house was stuffed full. But unfortunately many ornaments went with it, trophies and treasures of civilization accumulated by the labours of centuries. Republican Prussia was wedged in between German States which were already treating with the enemy, on one side, and on the other national Governments which also felt drawn to many an enemy's breast. Men like Brüning used to insist that among them there were well-intentioned elements which had merely got on the wrong track in their patriotism and must not be driven out; with these fine and generous arguments resolution was crippled, and almost

every step that might have hindered the evilly intentioned elements was made impossible.

Chancellor Brüning was brought down by Herr von Papen when President Hindenburg had been alienated from him, as he had already been from his own electors. Herr Brüning had assumed that the President's loyalty was unshakable as a rock, but men place their faith in rocks and go to wreck on them. Herr von Papen was brought down by Herr von Schleicher, who was then driven from the Chancellor's palace in his turn by Herr von Papen. In all these changes the guiding star was declared to be loyalty, as love had been claimed to be under the Inquisition.

There were traits in the personality of General von Schleicher which were attractive even when one saw the defects and weaknesses underlying them. He had the not too intellectual humour of a brisk military whole-hogger, and spoke with cheerful contempt of the people who were always saying that this or that is impossible. He had not studied social problems with any great thoroughness, but he was sincere in his aspiration to be the "social General." He was not stiff or aloof—he enjoyed society, and he was an optimist who over-estimated himself and his power and who, like the rest of these men who set traps for one another, underestimated the trickiness of the men at his side, even crediting them with some measure of steady decency. He was generally regarded as a thoroughly experienced intriguer, and I think he enjoyed this bad reputation and did his best to preserve it and increase it, and was led by it into failure to take necessary precautions. His word was not always as good as gold; he compelled General Groener to prohibit the brown uniforms, and then let the prohibition fall and his colleague with it. For him, as for his rivals, this sort of thing was

simply *Realpolitik*. Otto Braun considered that Herr von Papen should have been supported. This was also desired by bank directors and other persons with whom principles generally matter less than stock exchange quotations.

I asked Otto Braun whether he thought that on the day when Herr von Papen had the Prussian Ministers pulled out of their offices by military force, and occupied the police headquarters, resistance would not have been possible. On the morning of that day, July 20, 1932, those who carried out the coup had some fear that the Prussian Government might risk a counter-thrust, and that there might be a general strike, as at the time of the Kapp *putsch*. Otto Braun replied that any attempt to offer opposition would have utterly failed. The majority of the Prussian police were certainly loyal and reliable, but if a general strike had come Hindenburg would have proclaimed martial law, and the command of the police would have passed to the Reichswehr generals. The workers had been weakened physically and morally by the unending economic crisis, and would have been unable to fight unaided against all the heavily armed forces, not only the guns of the Reichswehr but the armed bodies of the National Socialists and the Stahlhelm. The police probably had a modest reserve of arms, but the change of command would have brought these arms into enemy hands. The only choice was between a sanguinary defeat and bloodless submission, and the latter was chosen rather than let proletarian combatants go to their death for a lost cause. Anything else would have been criminal, and the people had at least been saved from that disaster.

There was nothing to be said against all this, or at all events nothing against the view that on that 20th of July, 1932, a general strike and street fighting would only have led

to fearful slaughter and misery, and that barricades made up of piled bodies of workers would not have prevented a victory of the enemy. On July 20, 1932, it was no longer possible for the Prussian Republic to win battles. But it should have formed its army of defence earlier, and it would certainly have been possible to recruit and train the strong young men among the millions of unemployed, before the enemy gathered them in, fed them, drilled them, and formed them into brown regiments. But only those others had the necessary money or could get it; when the rich were called on for the protection of the State, they would give nothing, though it meant their own protection, and a parsimonious financial administration guarded the exchequer with pedantic correctness. From the trade unions, the "Reichsbanner," and the more radical associations there was formed the "Iron Front." I witnessed almost all its big demonstrations, which took place in the big open space of the Lustgarten, between the Palace and the Museum; it was ascertained each time that a hundred or a hundred and fifty thousand or more were present. But when the hundred thousand or hundred and fifty thousand sang the "Internationale" it sounded like "Abide with me," or the "Ave Maria." And when one looked closely at them one saw that in this vast army the battalions of strong young men, the daring youngsters with muscles of steel and a determined spirit, were only a minority. So many in these crowds bore the marks of the long privation of the economic crisis; hunger and cold, the unending vain search for work, the misery of homelessness or of fusty "lodgings for single men" and crowded refuges, had robbed them of vitality and courage. Alongside the young men stood or marched the old party members, decent and loyal, but apprehensive and without hope, and silent under the crushing

burden of their anxieties. I recognized there many a replica of the little man who had escorted me to the Dönhoffplatz in January 1919, with his rifle on his aching back; I saw the nameless soldier, cannon fodder in all wars and revolutions, the eternal victim in all crises and revolutions, Anatole France's Crainquebille, always in search of his due, always done out of it, always shaking his head in perplexity. Here once more he was marching by, in his tens of thousands, mutely compliant.

Yes, it was certainly right and proper that on that twentieth of July the Tsar of Prussia and his Ministers made no belated resistance, no attempt to call on the people to die uselessly for a freedom already lost. It is equally true that they had neither the co-operation of the other states nor the support of the national government nor the money with which to organize defence in time. But it is also true that they lacked another thing—passion, the unrelenting, unyielding passion that carries men away and fills them with enthusiasm, and creates armies without the need for a war chest. Through all those years they did work that fully deserves recognition, but it was the work of solid trustees, careful bookkeepers, diligent stewards; work done without fervour and without arousing fervour. Not even at the moment when they were driven out of their offices were they roused to passion. When the final scene of a play is so bad, the public no longer remembers that much of the first acts was distinctly better. The Prussian Ministers met the violence dealt out to them with no burst of indignation; in their ingrained correctness they found no "historic phrase," no sturdy, popular denunciation for the coup and its servants. Their demeanour was faultless, and after the event they hunted up the provisions of the law, compiled long

statements of protest, and brought actions like a tenant whose landlord has illegally given him notice. When Richard II, in Shakespeare's play, has yielded, not without grace, to the victorious Bolingbroke, the Abbot says: "A woeful pageant have we here beheld." No Shakespeare could make a tragedy out of the expulsion of the raided Prussian Government.

Whether a Republic had any chance of life on German soil, and whether under more favourable circumstances it would really have struck root, is a difficult question. In the manner of its birth and in the form it took it bore within it the seeds of all the evils which are fatal to any system of government. The Third Republic in France was also the result of defeat in the field; its birth certificate bore the date of Sedan. But the defeated emperor was a "usurper," and in the eyes of all lovers of liberty worse even than that; and there was also Gambetta to raise once more the banner of resistance. The German Revolution exploded blindly at the worst possible moment, and the Republicans were far too ready to relieve the old régime and its paladins of the odious duty of signing the peace treaty. The Republic brought chaos into order in the country, but, for all its exertions and its services, it was congenitally crippled. For the rich bourgeoisie, the big industrialists, and the professorial élite, for whom life had never been so pleasant as it was under the Republic, its leaders were too plebeian, and many people regarded themselves as very gracious when they accepted official invitations. The subordinate officials, the small shopkeepers and the cellar café-owners were as sour as always toward the hated "proletarians"; they saw no further than their own domestic troubles, and laid the blame for them all on these "cursed times." Youngsters of "good family" felt

the new competition from the clever working-class boys. It all used to be so simple: their conservative papas had gone through their examinations, joined some students' corps, and then passed steadily from one rung to the next in the state service. Now these fellows of common or unknown origin were everywhere, and not only that but getting on best and forging ahead. At a time when every profession was overcrowded, the competition for every career was enormous, and the difficulty of getting a living was steadily increasing, the thought of these rivals (whose importance was less than was imagined) contributed greatly to hardening hearts.

It must always be borne in mind that the peace treaty had greatly diminished Germany's territory. Officials, physicians, teachers, engineers, business men from the lost territories had taken refuge in Germany and tried to start life afresh there, and in the narrowed environment everyone was treading on his neighbour's toes and feeling his neighbour's elbows. There was not room enough and not work enough for the new generation. The Republic offered them fine ideals such as freedom and democratic self-determination. They were ideals for which eighty or a hundred years earlier the German *Burschenschaften*, the patriotic students' associations, had been full of enthusiasm, but they were not to the taste of young fellows who still received in the *Gymnasien*, the secondary schools, history teaching that was an incentive to violence. Clever political jugglers can make the public believe in all sorts of lands of promise; but the republican régisseurs knew nothing of these arts. Very soon, as was to be expected, all those who had gone into hiding during the November Revolution of 1918 ventured out again; and from all the scenes of war now evacuated countless men of spirit whose fighting instinct had been aroused, who were



thirsting for vengeance, and who intended to stick to their congenial trade of fighting when they got home, had been streaming back into the country. They won over to their side a large part of the youth. They brought to the justified national demands the spirit of wild hatred and civil war. They knew and taught the use of hand grenades, flame-throwers, and poison gas. They were expert in the organization of a prolonged and intensive bombardment that decimates the ranks before the attack and unnerves the last defenders.

These men declared that the army had been robbed of victory only by a traitorous stab in the back. The causes of its military defeats were perfectly clear, but legends are stronger than reality. Is it not generally believed, because Schiller so wrote, that the Republican Verrina threw Fiesco into the water and then uttered the famous phrase: "If the cloak falls the duke must follow"? And yet Verrina was entirely innocent in reality; Giovanni Luigi di Fiesco, Count of Lavagna, was hurriedly boarding the admiral's galley in Genoa harbour, during the struggle with the party of Andria Doria, when the rotten plank collapsed and he fell in with it.

But the various periods of the Republican régime differed greatly from one another, the feeling towards it was not at all times grudging and hostile, the barometer did not always show a depression. Especially in the fat years after the inflation, in spite of the agitation against the Young plan and the Dawes plan, there was no visible danger of a convulsion. The collapse of the German Republic began with the collapse of "prosperity" in America. It was from this "prosperity" that the credits had come which, after the mad period of inflation, and after the confidence bred of stabilization, had helped to create one more illusory boom in German trade, had

swelled the bank balances of the captains of industry, had once more stimulated the spirit of enterprise to the point of reckless adventurousness, and had provided good times for the workers; and this boom, like its predecessor, had been followed by a worse depression than ever, more than the best nerves could well bear, with bankruptcies, and a graveyard silence in the factories, and the horrors of unemployment. In 1925 there were only 200,000 registered unemployed, and in the summer of 1928, just before the thunderclap in America with which the world crisis began, there were scarcely over half a million. Only the enemies of the State were then doing bad business; at the Reichstag elections in May 1928 National Socialism with its 800,000 votes seemed a hopelessly insignificant group, far from every path to power. Eighteen months later those who were dissatisfied and those who had been squeezed out of employment began, after despairingly trying every other outlet, to go over to National Socialism, first hesitatingly and one at a time, then in haste and in crowds; they were found places in its organizations, and received with its doctrines its bread and boots.

Stresemann was dead; the Brüning Government was hampered by a thousand petty inhibitions and incapable of any effective action. All the plans considered for providing work came to grief on this sterile tendency to turn things this way and that, discuss them over and over again, and finally do nothing. Every useful proposal was defeated by some "but." My own feeling was that if the Republic was to be saved there was another thing that had got to be done—the conversion of the Reichswehr into a militia, or the addition of a militia to the reduced army. Then it would be possible to dissolve all the armed organizations, loyal and disloyal, while enlistment and contracts would provide a living for a

very considerable number of the unemployed and free them from intellectual and moral chaos. Justified national sensibilities, neither extreme nor hysterical, would be soothed. And a militia on the Swiss model, in which the sons of workers and peasants, the students and apprentices, the young men of all parties and all social grades, would come together, could not become the tool of any one political section or a weapon against the Republic. But when I tried to represent this in Paris to French parliamentarians as a reform which should be acceptable to France (I had discussed it on various occasions with high military authorities in Germany), even the most clear-headed among the leaders of the Left refused to entertain the idea. And when I advocated a militia in Germany and described its advantages, the German pacifists offered bitter opposition to this desecration of their ideas.

But, quite apart from the line taken by one public man or another, and quite apart from the special circumstances of the time, the inflation, the economic crisis, the devastating unemployment, and all the plagues that were afflicting the nation and its governments, did the coat that had been cut out at Weimar fit this nation? We must admit that it had not been cut to the measure of the average German but to the pretty pattern devised by the political tailors, and that it did not sit very well. In spite of all that happened we may agree with Mommsen that the worst constitutional state is preferable to the best autocratic régime. The democratic Republic, whatever form its leadership may take, represents to us the highest attainable form of state. But in Germany, where it was an emergency creation rather than a deliberate one, it was not built up on a solidly established foundation, and insufficient attention was paid in its architectural lay-out to the German political climate, which is so different from

that of other countries. The need for subordination, for sharp tones of command, for marching in strict formation, in companies under rigid leadership, is part of the German character; the Germans find satisfaction not only in commanding but in obeying, and it is no mere chance that the finest military marches are German. There remain the great men, the men of intellectual importance and of strong character. They are the incalculable element. In every state system there is room and need for them; but they cannot take the place of a system. Those who summon them without fitting them into a fixed framework of guarantees, without effectively binding them to the clauses of a constitution, place themselves in their power.

German Liberalism has always taken the British Constitution for its model. But the British Constitution has only reached its present shape after various processes of refining and adjusting. It rests on a tradition that governs popular feeling, on a remarkable acceptance of their lot by the poorer classes, which in their insular segregation know nothing of the ways of life of the Continental town worker, and on the political breadth of mind of an aristocracy which has not a vestige of community with the majority of the Prussian junkers. It rests on a special national possession which is every citizen's from birth, which makes even the "have-nots" self-respecting citizens—the assured possession of absolutely unquestioned personal freedom, the knowledge that within the limits of the law every British citizen, even the poorest and most insignificant, has his inviolate human rights. No doubt the cultural level of the ordinary Englishman is lower than that of the German; the dweller in the remotest of German villages will have learnt two or three poems of Goethe and Schiller, while among the masses in

England few could quote as much of Shakespeare. But the inherited consciousness of innate rights is perhaps the first condition and the foundation of all true civilization, and acquired culture is often no more than a thin protective stucco. The great creations in imaginative literature and the arts mean no more to the ordinary citizen than a transient gleam of sunshine. Such a monumental achievement in civilization as the Habeas Corpus Act of 1679, which guarantees to every Englishman the liberty and inviolacy of his person and protection from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, has done more for the progress and happiness of a nation than "Faust" could do.

We had one more look at Otto Braun's kitchen garden, and then parted. I went down to Ascona, past many country houses, old and new, with their bright gardens. Ascona was at first a favourite resort of German refugees, but apparently only for a short time; the young men and women writers and artists who at first were to be seen sitting at the tables in front of the small cafés went on elsewhere, to any place that seemed to hold out the hope of food and a lodging. Next morning I went on by train through Lugano, or, to be precise, along the high western plateau above the lake. The effigy of Socrates, stretched out in voluntary death, was far below, hidden beneath the vegetation of the park. He had not done his opponents and accusers the favour of shrinking back; he left to all the world that example of steadfastness.

It is true that he himself chose the time and the manner of his death, before old age ate away his powers and the end approached inescapably. Surrounded by his friends and mourned even by his gaoler, he died picturesquely, almost festively. The sentence had inevitably been harsh, but it was

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carried out with the considerateness dictated by the Hellenic respect for the things of the mind; and the very poison the condemned man drank, with his lasting fame already clear to him, had only the effect of a soporific and inflicted no painful convulsion. It is easy to imagine what would happen to a moralist of our own day who buttonholed citizens in the street, in the "pillared halls" and public places, and questioned them on "what is beautiful, what is disgraceful, what are prudence and folly, what should a state and a statesman, ruled and ruler, be like, and so forth"—things of which, according to Xenophon in his *Memorabilia*, only the bondsman is ignorant. If in our day some pertinacious inquirer were to try to hold up a high official of the state and extract from him his conception of justice, what sort of treatment would he get? Scarcely the gentlest.



■

AFTER a few months most of those who told us their stories or the results of their studies, in the garden of the hillside villa, had exhausted their subject, and it became necessary to arrange a new programme. Each reading had been followed by a discussion, while our hostess poured into our glasses a refreshing drink prepared on a recipe of her own. When I had finished a narrative recalling the years before the war the remark was made that that period now seemed idyllic. What had people had to go through then, what troubles could they have had, what had there been to get agitated about? Nothing more dreadful than a little shaking from Nulze. Sometimes there was a slight ironical opposition among my audience. After the reading on *The Jew Ballin* the discussion was particularly animated. The *American Viking* said that the talk should not always be only of the Jews—they had many companions in misfortune, and at all times other emigrants had suffered just as much as the Chosen People on their wanderings. The novelist agreed that in every revolution or fundamental change in a state the rights of some class had been curtailed or abolished, but in no revolutionary upheaval of modern times had the blood, the race of a minority been declared alien and injurious to the nation, a charge from which even the noblest characters and spirits were not excluded.

“At the same time,” the novelist continued, “it seems to me that the only Jews entitled to take up this issue are those who are themselves free from race prejudice. A protester, at all events on this particular point, must not himself maintain the standpoint of the Prophet Ezra, who made all

the men of Israel separate themselves 'from the strange wives,' and set up a commission of 'rulers of all the congregation' to inquire into the mixed marriages. Equally unfitted, of course, and a much less attractive type, are the Jews at the opposite pole from this unbending character, those who are of the pliable sort and try to curry favour with the men in power."

The physician smilingly quoted from Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*. Herder had written well and ill about the Jews, but had shown himself strangely misinformed when he declared that the Jews had never had any strong desire for a fatherland of their own. It was true that he wrote that part of his *Ideen* in 1780 or about then. Gustav Freytag had described in his *Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit* how under the never-ending oppression from which they suffered the Jews had concealed their best, their pride and talent and sensibility, within their homes and the circle of their relatives. Freytag closed his description with the remark that the new culture had influenced the Jews with the rest, and with a statement that sounds strange in our day: "The descendants of these wandering tribes from Asia have become our compatriots, living in fraternal emulation with us."

After a while the novelist spoke again:

"The Roman Emperor Claudius was something of a tragic figure in his private life. He seems to have known nothing of the doings of his wife Messalina, or to have preferred to ignore them and remain in the purer regions through which his spirit wandered. He occupied himself with all sorts of bizarre interests of no particular depth; invented, for instance, three new letters for the alphabet; but at times he showed plenty of good sense. The nobles in the conquered

Transalpine Gaul wanted to be given Roman citizenship, and put forward a proposal that they should be admitted to offices in the state. Strong opposition to this was raised in the Senate. Claudius supported the proposal and silenced opposition by pointing out that the greatness and power of Rome had been simply due to racial admixture, to the fusion of national elements of the most varied origin and type. "Is it a misfortune," he said, "that the family of the Balbi came from Spain to settle in Rome, or men of equal excellence from Gallia Narbonensis? Descendants of theirs are still among us, and are no less loyal to their present fatherland than we are. What was it that brought disaster in the end to the Lacedæmonians and the Athenians in spite of all their victories in war? Simply this, that they treated the peoples they disarmed as aliens and carefully excluded them from their own life."

The Viking pulled a face and asked what was the need for quoting Claudius and Rome instead of calling things by their proper names, as our opponents did. They were better acquainted with national psychology and were not afraid of banality, including the banality of incessant repetition, instead of over-refining as the Liberals did, burking the psychological issue; and this had brought them their success. He himself preferred the directness of their verbal bombardments.

While I was reading the story of Socrates and Exile, the Viking had pulled out of one of his portfolios a blue-covered brochure containing a German publishing firm's announcements of recently issued scientific works. From the summary of the contents of a book on *Germanenkunde und nationale Bildung* it appeared that the author, a schoolmaster, described the ancient Teuton as the "discoverer and inventor

of virtually all the elements of civilization" with which humanity has been enriched. Everything, according to this author, indicated "that the artistic energy which bore such noble fruits in ancient Greece had its birth in Nordic territory." It was interesting to note that the publisher had dropped a clear hint of doubt of the justification of this theory. The Norwegian American passed the brochure round, to show how vast a number of books on prehistory, the Teutons, and racial history had been published in Germany in no more than two months.

"There is nothing so surprising about that," said our host; "drop a bit of meat on the path in a wood, and the ants will come up from all sides and go to work on it."

The Viking next showed us the "blurb" of a work on the *Herkunft und Geschichte des arischen Stammes*, "The origin and history of the Aryan stock." The author of this book places the cradle of the Aryan stock on the island of Atlantis, which he holds to have been somewhere off the Portuguese coast. The Biblical Deluge was the submergence of the island of Atlantis. The only survivors of this catastrophe and of another, a world conflagration, were an old one-eyed man, later called Wotan, and a young woman whom he saved and who bore him a son and a daughter in a cave. From Wotan and his protégés "all the Teutons are descended."

"We are talking such a lot about justice," said the young girl, going off at a tangent—"and really the fame Socrates won by his death was not justified a bit. So many other people have died for their ideas with at least as much steadfastness, and it is very unjust to glorify only one man and put up monuments to him. In reality it is all just words, and when Socrates set out to interpret justice to people he himself skated round things that did not suit him. There

is no such thing as justice."

"Obviously," replied the art critic. "There is no justice in this world. There are only laws, and that is not the same thing, and often the very opposite. Men are no more just than fate is. But if it is wrong to talk only of Socrates, Homer should not have sung the praises of Hector and Achilles, for great numbers of Greeks and Trojans fell fighting bravely."

The young girl stuck to her guns. At school, she said, she could not stand Achilles. There we left Socrates and the rest of the ancient Greeks, and came down to our own day. The Genevese banker asked whether it was not true that not only Mussolini's ideas but, except for its racial theories, those of National Socialism had been influenced by the French Socialist Georges Sorel, or rather by his book *Réflexions sur la Violence*.

The novelist said that the younger and more radical writers among the National Socialists, at all events in the period preceding the party's victory, had given much attention to Sorel, but there were others who had had no need of his instruction, or of any books, to make them turn to physical force; Sorel, moreover, had advocated force only in the form of the general strike. If a man is jealous by nature he can get worked up to the proper pitch without reading *Othello*. Least of all, as we had seen, had Sorel influenced his comrades of the Socialist parties, for they had given Goethe's "You must rise or fall . . . be hammer or anvil" an interpretation of their own, and had felt happiest in a passivity garlanded with oratory. And by "*la violence*" Sorel had not for one moment meant brutality; he expressly repudiated the very idea of terrorism. He himself, moreover, had had no ambition to be a leader, but only an educator.

The novelist then took up the young girl's remarks on justice, and said that a moment ago he had been guilty of an injustice himself, though surely a pardonable one in comparison with those of the world around us. One should not speak of "the Social Democrats" any more than of the Germans, the French, the Jews, or teachers, or candlestick-makers, as though they were a single body and mind and soul; it is always an injustice to speak in the plural.

After the history of the Knight of Romance, and again after the last reading, in which the word "militia" made its appearance, the out-and-out pacifists present expressed their doubts. The carnation-grower, an English Liberal, was a man of delicate perceptions, and, like so many of his compatriots, had a huge stock of idealistic principles ready for any fitting occasion. I replied to the objectors that I had never found even the learned pacifists, who set out to erect juridical barriers against the danger of war, very convincing. But least convincing of all was the other sort of pacifism, which envelops realities in the sweetest of casing and then, when it is too late, discovers their full bitterness. The best pacifist, I said, is the statesman with a strong sense of realities, who steers clear of all pleasing illusions, looks ahead, and before undertaking anything considers every possible outcome, and so averts perils. Any concrete policy demands the possession of concrete power, resulting either from a nation's own preparedness or from its treaties of alliance. But if Bismarck's teaching is ignored and insufficient account is taken of the imponderabilia, as was done in 1914 and during the war, those who rely on power are apt to find that they are out in their calculations.

The carnation-grower and the Italian countess asked, both speaking at once:

"What are these imponderabilia, which Bismarck considers should never be left out of account?"

"By the imponderables he means the feelings and ideas of the rest of the world."

If Germany, asked the banker, went to war yet again, and lost again, would not her opponents insist this time on "making an end of it" and annihilating the conquered nation for all time? I replied that in that case the annihilationist politicians would be no more "making an end of it" than their predecessors at Versailles, and would be acting with the same short-sightedness; and, needless to say, a victorious Germany would be just as unable ever to "make an end of it" by such methods.

We did not entirely neglect the inevitable question, discussed and dissected thousands of times before, whether there is such a thing as progress, whether the spirit of man has advanced to any higher stage since ancient times, or whether there has merely been, alongside the grandiose achievements of the exact sciences and of technical advance, a fairly steady improvement in social conditions. The pessimists denied that there had been any spiritual and moral advance, but a Spanish émigré was more optimistic: after every backward swing, he said, of the pendulum the next swing forward goes a little further, and progress consists of the sum of these surpluses.

"It seems to me," said the young girl petulantly, "that the pendulum also swings a long way back, and for what you call the surpluses to tot up to anything reasonable will take a few thousand years more."

"Some nations," remarked the Genevese banker, "look at everything from the economic standpoint, and take it for granted that prosperity carries with it a period of flourishing

culture and intellectual advance, and that art, literature, and the sciences forge ahead with the price of cotton. It is true, of course, that when the price goes up it is possible to endow museums and libraries; masterpieces are purchased, book sales increase once more, and prizes are conferred on poets and scholars. But all the endowments and awards are no substitute for a Goethe, who, as it happens, did not live at a time of economic and political prosperity; and the Medici themselves would have been no more than millionaires and local bigwigs but for the artists of the Renaissance."

Considering how much our host owed to his father-in-law's enthusiasm as a collector, some of the company regarded these remarks as a little indelicate, but our host was not so sensitive; he nodded in agreement, and then gave some examples of the various ways in which nations can be given the idea that they are steadily progressing and gaining distinction of character.

"After all," he added, "when the masses in Germany go marching in strict formation, filling the air with the rhythmical roar of their tramping, they have a firm belief that they are on the way to everything that is great and splendid. Obviously they have to be given ideas to their taste to march with, but they need in addition this sense of striding forward, the impetus conveyed by a sharp word of command, a physical impetus that has its effect in turn on their spirit. The marching is still going on; it has been going on since the nation was torn from its normal and peaceful life in the summer of 1914, and its equilibrium destroyed; and for the present it will continue unceasingly."

The novelist asked:

"And whither now?"

THE END





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